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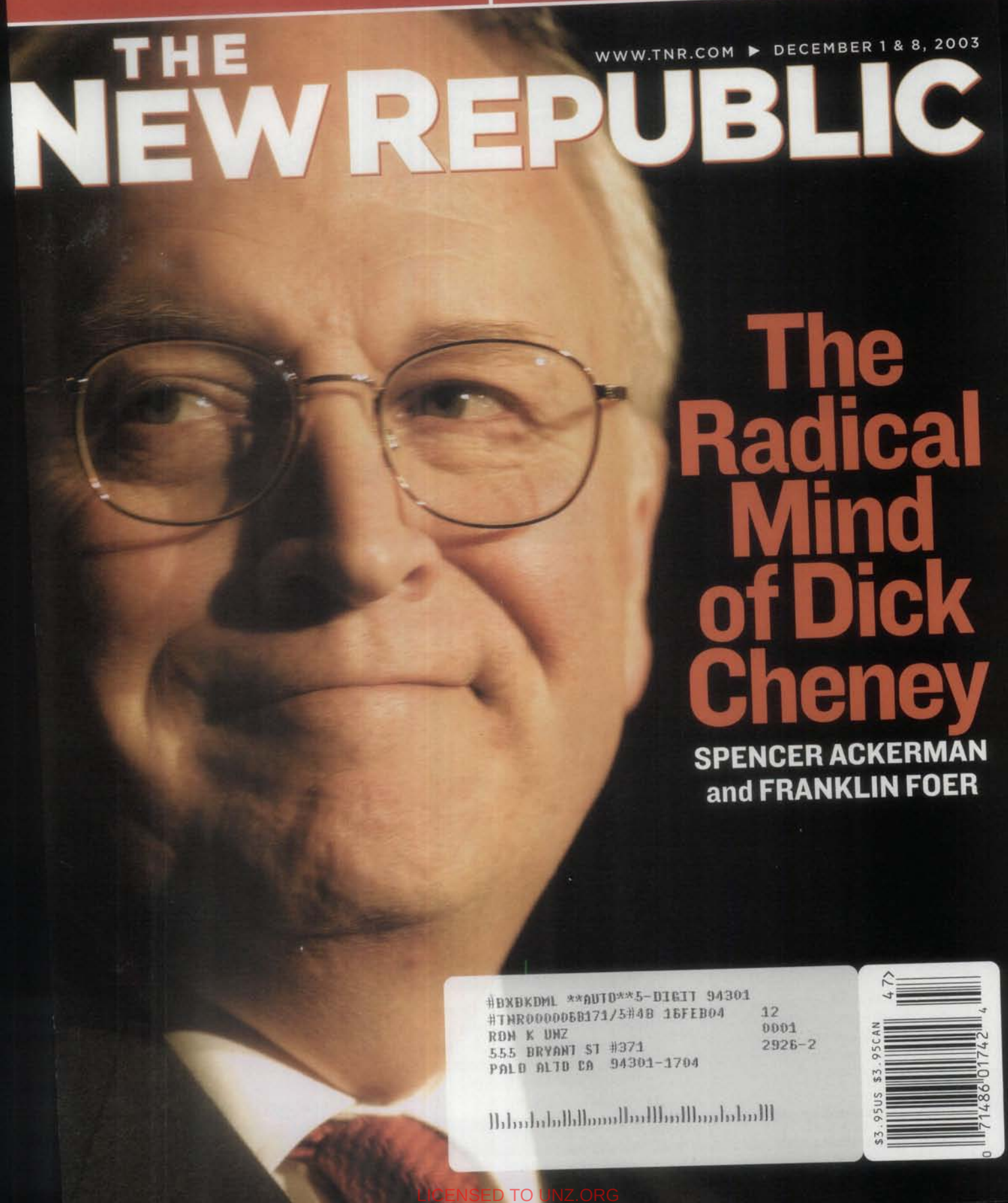

The Radical Mind of Dick Cheney

SPENCER ACKERMAN and FRANKLIN FOER

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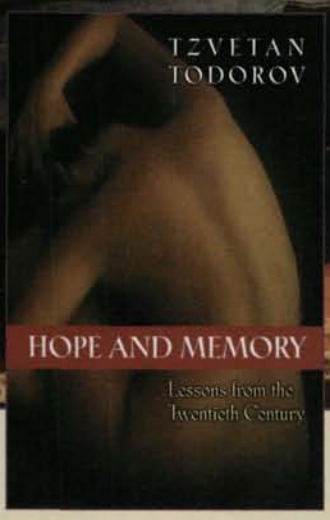

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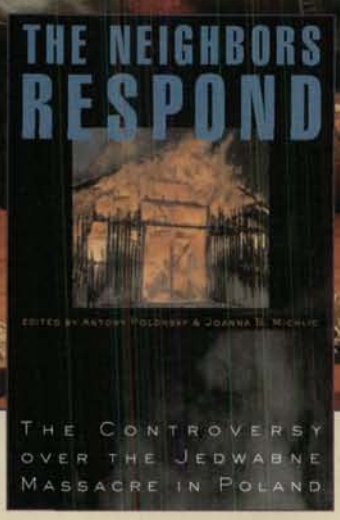

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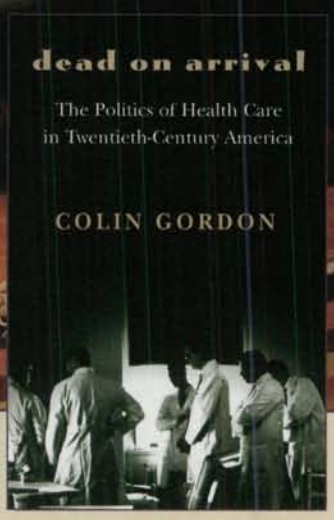

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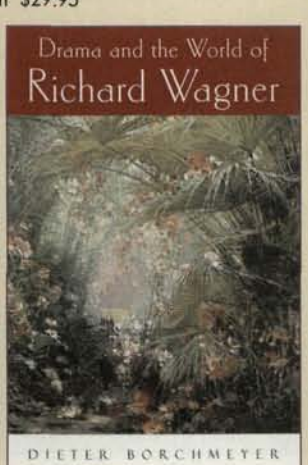

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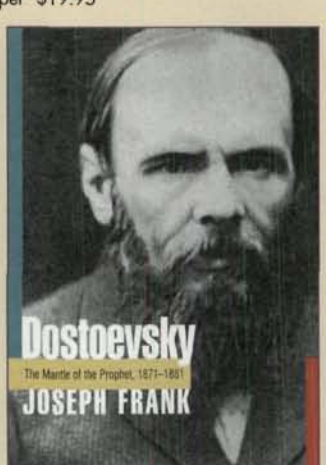

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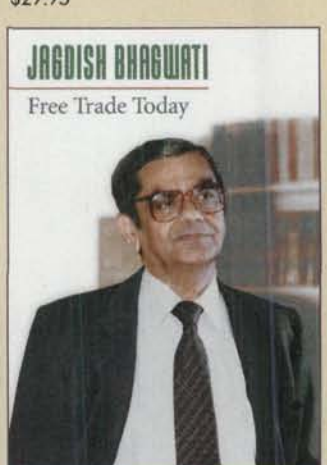

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FALSE ALARM

REGARDING BOB DROGIN'S ARTICLE "Friendly Fire" on the Kay report: All the commentary I have seen on this report amounts to a Rorschach test (October 27). That is, it reveals more about the preconceived bias and attitude of the commentator than it does the merits of the Kay report.

Consider: Drogin writes, "Kay found no evidence that Iraq had taken significant steps to build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material after 1991." Yet, in the report itself, the following can be found: "evidence of Saddam's continued ambition to acquire nuclear weapons."

Drogin writes, "If no chemical weapons were produced in bulk after 1991, as Kay now concedes . . . ." Yet, according to the August 8 *Boston Globe*, "Republican Guard commanders were ordered by Hussein's regime to launch chemical-filled shells at oncoming coalition troops."

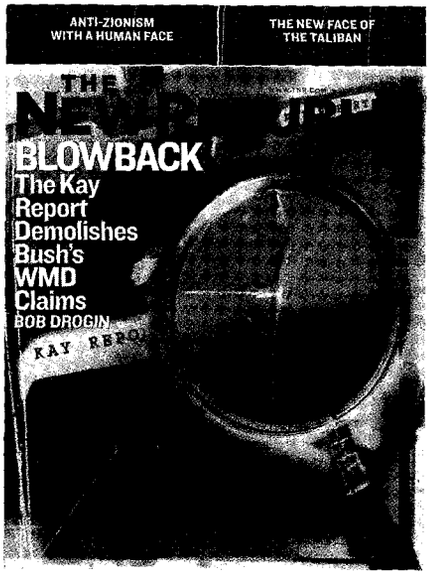
I am reminded of NASA's Viking mission of the mid-'70s, which was to settle the question of whether there was life on Mars. Experiments were devised, results were obtained, and the mission was a success. Yet, far from settling the controversy, the mission simply added to the heat of the disputes. The results could be and were interpreted in many ways—usually according to the preexisting bias of the researcher.

Similarly, in the case of the Kay report, the results are used to support the arguments of both sides. So what is a fair-minded observer to do? I must conclude that the Kay report has settled nothing and that, in fact, attitudes are so hardened that evidence is almost irrelevant at this point. Spinning the facts is all-important for both sides.

EUGENE H. SCOTT
Earlysville, Virginia

NO END IN SIGHT

LEON WIESELTIER, WITH EVEN MORE than his usual brio, takes after Tony Judt for a piece in *The New York Review*


ANTI-ZIONISM WITH A HUMAN FACE
THE NEW FACE OF THE TALIBAN
BLOWBACK
The Kay Report Demolishes Bush's WMD Claims
BOB DROGIN

of Books suggesting that the long-discussed but never implemented "two-state" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not merely dead but murdered ("What is Not to be Done," October 27). The villains identified are Ariel Sharon and his ventriloquist dummy, the current president of the United States.

Judt does not welcome this state of affairs. But what is he—or anyone—to do when, as Wieseltier himself puts the point, "The Likud and the settlers movement have madly jeopardized the Zionism of numbers with the Zionism of borders"? It is exactly that sentiment, however, which dominates the government of Israel, and it is the insistence of those Israeli officials, Sharon chief among them, on Greater Israel that induces the despair reflected in Judt's observations.

RICHARD W. HULBERT
Brooklyn, New York

WIESELTIER FORCEFULLY DEbunks the leftist fantasy of a "binational state" to replace—and destroy—Israel. But he understates the case by advocating "the creation of two states for two nations." The Palestinians are already the recipients of a state, derived

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from a large part of the original British mandate: Trans-Jordan, now Jordan. So the proposed solution is more accurately termed "three states for two nations."

EVAN KAISER
Seekonk, Massachusetts

WIESELTIER WRITES PASSIONATELY when he defends Israel from what he terms the "bi-national fantasy." And he is correct, in a way, to note that this idea of a single, multiethnic state from river to sea "is not the alternative for Israel. It is the alternative to Israel." But, and unfortunately, a bi-national state is very much less a fantasy than his preferred solution of partition.

The West Bank and the Gaza Bank together, if ceded in their entirety, add up to an area less than one-third the size of New Jersey, in two noncontiguous chunks. In a few years, the territories are projected to have a combined population rivaling Israel's, with no economy to speak of. For partition to work—from the Israelis' perspective, not the Palestinians'—a Palestinian state would have to actually function. It needn't be Luxembourg, but it cannot be Liberia. If every settlement were disbanded and every inch of disputed territory ceded, it is implausible that anything other than a failed state implacably hostile to Israel would result. The Israeli government correctly understands this and has decided that the status quo is preferable.

But Israel can become a "modern, multiethnic state," meaning it would no longer be the Jewish state. But, if the transformation is undertaken deliberately, it needn't amount (in David Frum's phrase) to "genocidal liberalism." Israel's legal framework could be reworked to make impossible any tyranny through demography. Israel could define the criteria for the naturalization of noncitizen residents to ensure an orderly assimilation of the redeemable majority. For the minority who, by virtue of past behavior, could never be accepted as Israeli citizens, third-country options could be negotiated. Participation in the armed forces could be restricted to second- or third-generation citizens.

Israel would, eventually, no longer be the Jewish state. But the Jewish state would not have died. Instead, it would have given birth.

STEVE WALDMAN
Baltimore, Maryland

TO RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

GEORGE W. BUSH SIMPLY DOES NOT have a clear sense of strategy when he praises Vladimir Putin. However, the editors' insinuation that this is merely another case of President Bush lacking judgment is silly and unproductive ("Soul Mates," October 27). Bush might not have a shrewd sense of strategy, but he isn't operating without a roadmap, either. The Bush administration over the past year has pursued a policy that seeks to take advantage of the severe demographic changes in Russia. Foolish as it may be, it indeed is something.

By 2040, the RAND Corporation estimates that Russia will have fewer people than the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, and the Philippines. According to the state statistics committee Goskomstat, the population shrank by 1.8 million people since the 1989 census. Earlier this year, Putin declared that the average Russian life expectancy had declined from 67 years in 1999 to 64 years in 2002. There is growing alarm in Russia, and the case can be made that Bush's lustrous comments are aimed at alleviating the resulting jump in Russian ethnocentrism. It's time to stop underestimating the president and give him the credit that is his due.

THOMAS CHEPLICK
Washington, D.C.

FAULT LINES

IRONICALLY, MICHAEL CROWLEY'S criticisms in his article "Blind Rage" are themselves misplaced (October 27). Being for the reconstruction of Iraq only if it is paid for by repealing tax cuts yet to take effect is the most reasonable Democratic position. The fact that it's a "political nonstarter" isn't the fault of the Democrats; it's the fault of the Republicans. It's ridiculous to say that one side is being obstructionist when the other side is even less willing to compromise. The only real difference between the Democrats' reluctance to support the reconstruction package as designed by President Bush and the Republicans' unwillingness to look at other possible revenue sources is that the Republicans currently have the majority. Democrats are under no obligation to vote for the lesser of two evils if both evils are caused by the Republicans' insane dictum that not lowering taxes as projected is the same as raising them.

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Art and Artists

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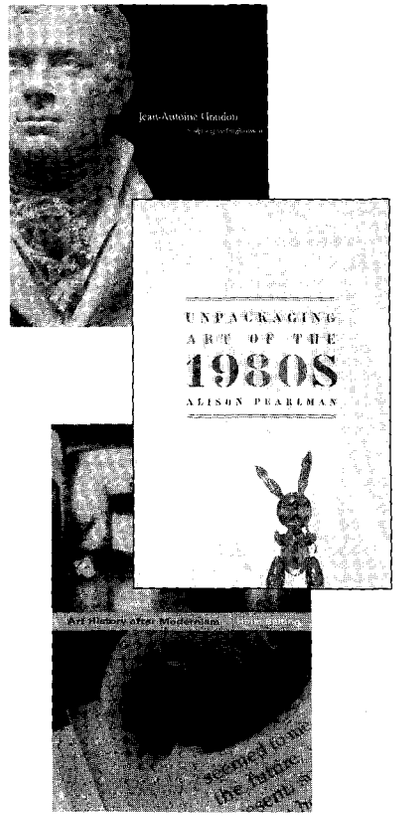

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Whiplash

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

On September 7, in an address to the nation, President Bush said the following: "The terrorists have a strategic goal. They want us to leave Iraq before our work is done. They want to shake the will of the civilized world. In the past, the terrorists have cited the examples of Beirut and Somalia, claiming that, if you inflict harm on Americans, we will run from a challenge. In this, they are mistaken."

The Beirut and Somalia references resonated with the president's supporters, who had long explained Al Qaeda's rise as the result of America's withdrawals under fire. "To speak impatiently about reducing the American presence in Iraq signals a lack of resolve to see the reconstruction through," argued a September 15 editorial in *National Review*. "Such signaling is dangerous." Many conservatives excoriated Democrats for lacking such resolve. "Mr. Bush's political adversaries believe they can woo voters with the message that we should placate the enemy by leaving Iraq 'before our work is done,'" declared a scornful September 25 column in *The Washington Times*.

France, unsurprisingly, took a different view. Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin warned the United States against digging in its heels. Only moving from a "logic of occupation" to a "logic of the restoration of sovereignty" would stop Iraqi terrorism, he argued. Conservatives, unsurprisingly, ridiculed the gutless French. *National Review* suggested that de Villepin's call for "a rapid turnover to an Iraqi government" was hypocritical, given that Paris supported ongoing U.N. and NATO control in Bosnia and Kosovo years after the Balkan wars. "France's cynicism," argued *National Review*, "is transparent."

On September 22, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice disparaged de Villepin's proposal in greater detail. "The French plan, which would somehow try to transfer sovereignty to an unelected group of people, just isn't workable," she insisted. "It's a country [Iraq] that needs an orderly process to get to the writing of a constitution ... followed then by elections and then by the transfer of sovereignty." On background, a "senior administration official" was even more emphatic. "I can guarantee you," the official declared, "that the American people, the president of the United States ... are not prepared to transfer sovereignty to 25 unelected people. It's just not going to happen."

That was then.

This week, in an abrupt about-face, the Bush administration tasked the "25 unelected people" of the Iraqi Governing Council with writing a transitional constitution by March 2004. By April, Iraq will have a "Transitional National Assembly," selected in provincial caucuses consisting of participants chosen by the United States. That unelected assembly will choose a provisional government, and, by July, the U.S. will give that unelected government—you guessed it—sovereignty.

After it gains sovereignty, Iraq's transitional government is supposed to oversee elections for a constitutional convention and a new government—thus writing itself out of existence. Will Iraq's provisional leaders break with national tradition and hand over power? In a deep sense, the Bush administration no longer cares.

Sovereignty, as the Bushies used to tell the cynical French, was America's trump card—our leverage to ensure that Iraq's nascent politicos stayed on the democratic path. But, in recent weeks, American deaths have mounted and U.S. public opinion has soured as an election year approaches. Our experience with the governing council has shown just how difficult and time-consuming it is to build democratic institutions in Iraq. So we are no longer demanding them. The transfer of sovereignty will likely accompany a large-scale withdrawal of American troops—further reducing America's leverage. As Reuel Marc Gerecht recently put it in *The New York Times*, "The administration that waged a war for democracy now wants an exit strategy that is not at all dependent upon Iraq's democratic progress." Perhaps it's a coincidence, but, two days before the new transition plan, General John Abizaid, the American commander for Iraq, said, "We will stay as long as we need to to ensure that ... a *moderate* Iraqi government emerges." Note the new language: Hosni Mubarak's government is moderate, too.

Many conservatives who once scorned liberals for wanting to quit Iraq have embraced Bush's new strategy. How arrogant, they say, to assume the Iraqi people need U.S. pressure to build a democracy. But the Iraqi "people" have little to do with it. Bush's plan will strengthen unelected power brokers, none of whom—be they exiles, Shia clerics, or former Baathists—have much experience with democracy. To conflate these self-proclaimed nationalist leaders with the Iraqi people is exactly the kind of fallacy for which the right used to excoriate the anti-colonial left. *The Wall Street Journal* this week editorialized that "the important point is that Iraqis begin to exercise authority, take responsibility for doing so, and be recognized for it by the Iraqi people." But Iraqis exercised authority and were recognized for it under Saddam Hussein. The important point is that the Iraqis who exercise authority lay the foundations for democracy, even if it imperils their newfound power. The Bush administration's accelerated political and military transition makes that less likely.

And the Bush administration's reversal doesn't only undermine the prospects for Iraqi democracy. It undermines something the right values even more: deterrence. As the president himself implied on September 7, the September 11 attacks happened because, after Beirut, Somalia, the 1993 World Trade Center attack, and the 1998 embassy bombings, the United States looked weak. The key to winning the war on terrorism, conservatives said, was never again to cut and run. The terrorists had to learn that, instead of chasing the United States from the Muslim world, their attacks would merely strengthen our will. Principled hawks like John McCain and Gerecht's colleagues at *The Weekly Standard* still believe that, which is why they want to respond to the attacks in Iraq with more American troops—even if that means more young Americans die. But that principle has run smack into President Bush's reelection calculations. And, last week, the White House—and many conservatives—made their choice.

Beirut, Somalia, whatever.

PETER BEINART

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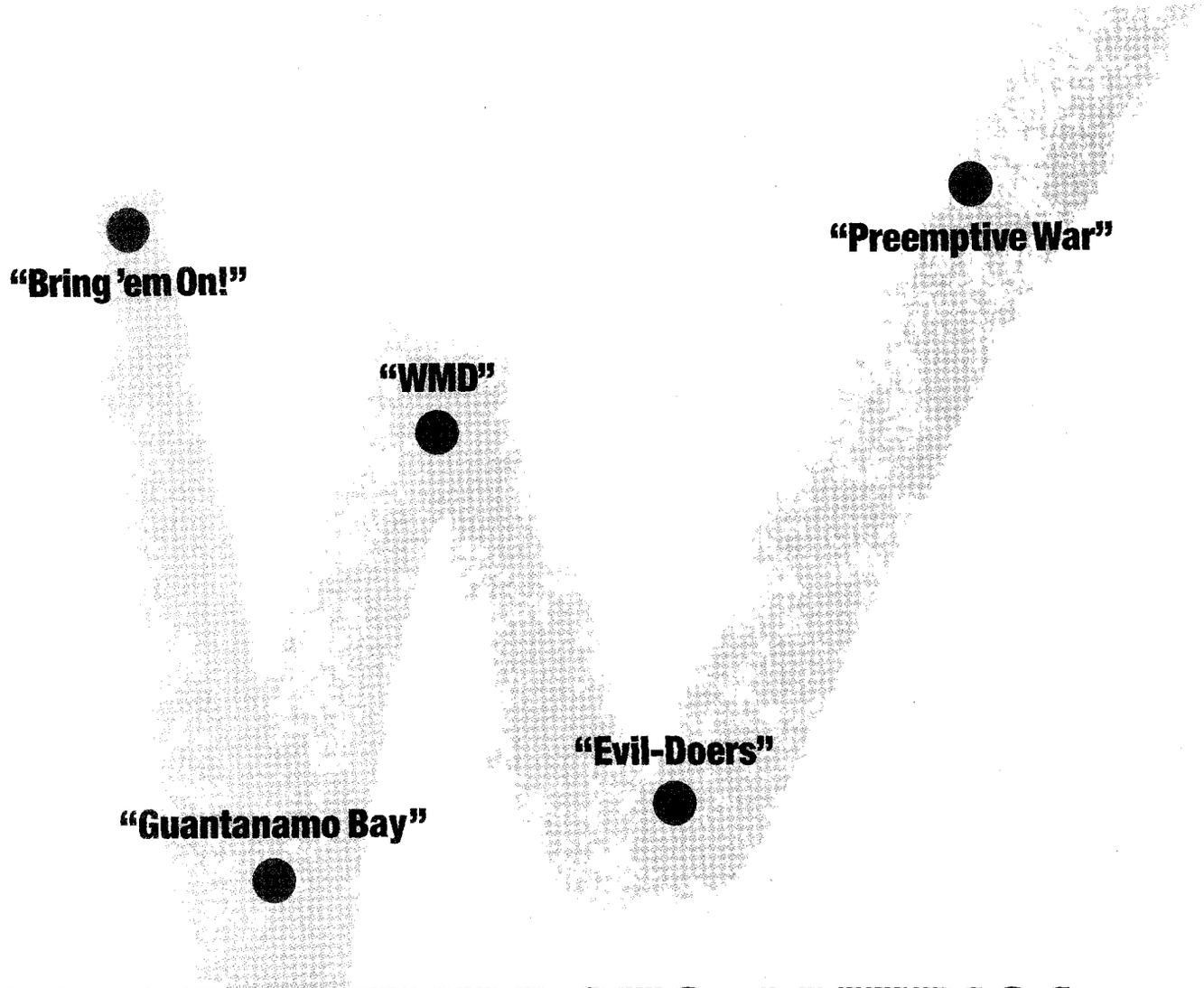

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U P D A T E

SAUDI ARABIA: ACTIONS AND ARRESTS

WAR ON TERRORISM

There is no question that the international community has been engaged in a fierce war with a shadow enemy since September 2001. Nations around the world recognize the responsibility not only to protect their own citizens from the threat of terrorism, but to protect the citizens of other countries as well. Every government has had to take a stand in the fight against evil. Often, the truth is hard to determine because terrorists hide behind so many flags.

As part of a public debate in the United States, Saudi Arabia has come under much scrutiny. While our leaders have clearly stated our position and denounced terrorism at every turn, we recognize that we will ultimately be judged not by our words, but by our deeds.

Since September 2001, Saudi Arabia has arrested more than 600 individuals with suspected ties to terrorism. Over the course of these arrests, Saudi security officers also seized large quantities of high explosives, automatic rifles and rocket launchers, tons of bomb-making materials and devices, false identity cards and documents, and large amounts of cash. Many security officers have been killed or injured in recent counter-terror activities.

Many of these arrests have been highlighted in the world press, including:

• Three clerics, Ali Fahd Al-Khudair, Ahmed Hamoud Mufreh Al-Khaledi and Nasir Ahmed Al-Fuhaid, were arrested after calling for support of the terrorists who carried out the Riyadh attacks.

• Saudi police killed two suspected terrorists and arrested six other suspected Al-Qaeda militants after a shootout in the holy city of Makkah on Monday, November 3, 2003. Officers also seized a large cache of weapons they believe were stockpiled for attacks during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

• On October 5, 2003 security forces arrested three suspects during a raid in the desert to the east of Riyadh. On October 8, 2003 security forces raided a farm in the northern Muleda area of Qasim Province and were able to arrest a suspect. Three other suspects fled the scene.

• Security forces killed one terrorist suspect and arrested two others in an apartment in the city of Jizan on September 23, 2002. The suspects were armed with machine guns and pistols and a large quantity of ammunition.

• Saudi security forces, July 28, killed six terrorist suspects and injured one more in a gunfight at a farm in Qasim Province, 220 miles north of the capital, Riyadh. Two Saudi security officers were killed and eight suffered minor injuries. Four people who harbored the suspects were arrested.

• Three men were arrested at a checkpoint in Al-Ka'akia district of Makkah on July 25 for possessing printed material that included a "religious edict" in support of terrorist acts against Western targets.

• The Ministry of Interior announced on July 21 that Saudi authorities had defused terrorist operations which were about to be carried out against vital installations and arrested 16 members of a number of terrorist cells after searching their hideouts in farms and houses in Riyadh Province, Qasim Province and the Eastern Province.

• Turki Nasser Mishaal Aldandany, another top Al-Qaeda operative and mastermind of the May 12 bombings, was killed on July 3, 2003 along with three other suspects in a gun battle with security forces that had them surrounded.

• Ali Abdulrahman Said Alfagsi Al-Ghamdi, a.k.a. Abu Bakr Al-Azdi, who surrendered to Saudi authorities. Al-Ghamdi, considered one of the top Al-Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia, is suspected of being one of the masterminds of the May 12 bombings in Riyadh.

• Yousif Salih Fahad Al-Ayeeri, a.k.a. Swift Sword, a major Al-Qaeda operational planner and fundraiser, was killed on May 31 while fleeing from a security patrol.

As the War on Terrorism wages on, Saudi Arabia remains committed to rooting out and bringing to justice those who perpetrate such heinous acts.

"I vow to my fellow citizens, and to the friends who reside among us, that the State will be vigilant about their security and well-being. Our nation is capable, by the Grace of God Almighty and the unity of its citizens, to confront and destroy the threat posed by a deviant few and those who endorse or support them. With the help of God Almighty, we shall prevail."

Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz,
May 13, 2003

"After the terrible attacks in Riyadh on May the 12th, the government of Saudi Arabia has intensified its longstanding efforts against the Al-Qaeda network...America and Saudi Arabia face a common terrorist threat, and we appreciate the strong, continuing efforts of the Saudi government in fighting that threat."

President George W. Bush,
July 1, 2003

THE PEOPLE OF SAUDI ARABIA
Allies Against Terrorism

www.saudiembassy.net

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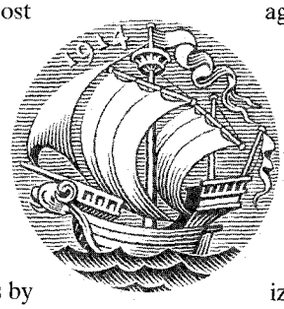
Mass Appeal

ON TUESDAY, THE Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court finally ruled in the case of *Goodridge, et al.* v. *Department of Public Health*. In a four-three decision, the court found that denying gay citizens the right to marry was a violation of the state's constitution. The media and political coverage that followed focused almost exclusively on the potential political ramifications: How would the Democrats and President Bush respond, what would happen in the Massachusetts state legislature, and so on. There will be time for that discussion. But the ruling presents a more immediate question: Do its arguments stand up under scrutiny? Are equal rights in civil marriage something we should support or oppose?

Reading the decision, the conclusion is obvious. Even the dissenters essentially conceded the majority's superior reasoning on the case's substance, differing instead on the proper role of the courts in this arena. That is not a matter to be dismissed lightly, but those concerned about justices imposing their views on a reticent populace should take note of several polls suggesting that at least half of Massachusetts residents support gay marriage. And the key question is not about judicial overreach but whether there is any justification for refusing homosexuals the right to marry.

Social conservatives have argued that denying homosexuals license to marry does not violate their civil rights because they could *choose* to avoid discrimination: That is, they could choose to be gay, or they could choose to get married. But the court acknowledged, as the U.S. Supreme Court did earlier this year in *Lawrence* v. *Texas*, that homosexual citizens are not merely heterosexuals in disguise. The court upheld that sexual orientation is hardwired, not a matter of choice.

What remaining basis is there for denying homosexuals the right to civil marriage? The primary reason the state of Massachusetts gave is that marriage is linked to procreation, and, since gay couples cannot procreate by themselves, they are ineligible for marriage. But there are millions of married couples in this country who have no children and desire no children—and yet we do not deny them the legal protections of civil marriage. As a matter of law, Massachusetts has no legal requirement that a couple commit to procreation in order to get a marriage license. The state's main case collapses upon the most casual inspection.



Moreover, the court also acknowledged, in the words of Justice Earl Warren, that "the freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men." It is guaranteed under the Constitution to aliens and deadbeat dads, to people of every religion and none. Even when citizens can be denied the right to vote—as convicted felons in many states are—they are still guaranteed the right to marry. Excluding gay citizens is therefore an astonishing denial of a basic civil right.

We do not know where this debate is going. But we do know, as the *Goodridge* case shows beyond doubt, that the arguments against equal marriage rights are so weak that they should not carry the day. We see no way in which allowing gay citizens to marry could have a negative social effect. On the contrary. By bringing a marginalized group of people within the unifying fold of family and common citizenship, we both strengthen marriage and strengthen society.

We are not dealing with religious issues here. This is about *civil*—not religious—marriage, and the principle of our civil order should be equality. The president is out of bounds in declaring any secular institution "sacred." Moreover, the religious right's attempts to respond to *Goodridge* by getting the federal government to quash decisions of individual states, through constitutional amendment or congressional legislation, violate a basic principle of marriage law in this country: that it is a matter for states and states alone. We have long suspected that the religious right's alleged support for federalism was always a disguise for its sectarian agenda and would collapse the minute a state wanted to do something its members disliked. Now we know.

Tuesday was a landmark day, an advance in the great, unfinished journey of equal dignity and equal rights for all citizens. We urge everyone to see beneath the political posturing to this simple and powerful truth. Citizenship is indivisible. Equality is non-negotiable. We urge the Democratic Party and the Democratic presidential candidates to affirm this truth, not as some sop to a special interest but as a statement of fundamental principle. And we urge all people of goodwill to make this battle their own. ■

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NOTEBOOK

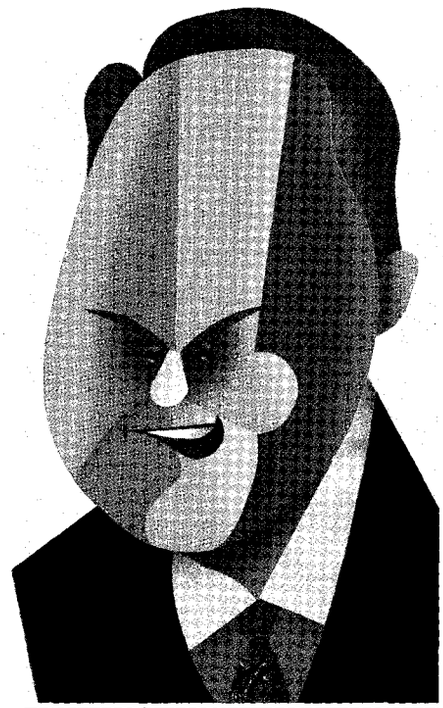
RUSH LIMBAUGH, RECOVERING ADDICT . . . ZELL MILLER, RECOVERING DEMOCRAT

RUSH TO JUDGMENT

RETURNING TO HIS RADIO SHOW THIS week after a month spent at a drug-treatment facility, Rush Limbaugh apologized to the drug addicts he has spent years vilifying, promised to be more compassionate in the future, and apologized for his own moral hypocrisy.

Just kidding. Rather, the Orotund One used his first show back to deny that he had ever been a hypocrite and wallow in newfound, New Age narcissism. "People are saying that I am a hypocrite, as I was using drugs. Yet I was telling people to lead a moral life," Limbaugh explained. "[But] my behavior doesn't change right and wrong. . . . There's no hypocrisy in this, because . . . it didn't change the value of right and wrong simply because I didn't abide by it at a particular time." Umm, exactly. No one is arguing that Limbaugh's transgressions made taking drugs "right," merely that, as he himself admits, he was saying one thing and doing another—in a word, a hypocrite.

To take just a couple examples from his past, Limbaugh once opined, "We have alcoholics and drug addicts in our society, don't we? And what do we say about them? Well, they can't help it. . . . [Y]eah, like that line of cocaine just happened to march into the hotel, go up to the athlete's room, and put itself right in front of him on his blotter." More to the point, he also once declared that "too many whites are getting away with drug use. . . . The answer is to go out and find the ones who are getting away with it, convict them, and send them up the river." Now that Limbaugh himself has been found, however, conviction and a trip up the river do not appear to be the next steps in his personal program. Instead, he wants to share with listeners his moving experience in rehab: "What I endured was a wonderful process. . . . I think what I went through in these last five weeks was as important as the first grade and maybe the second grade," he enthused. "And you can boil it down to one simple essence: I can't be responsible for anybody's happiness but my own. . . . It's wonderful. It actually is an amazing thing."



Rush Limbaugh

A new, more forgiving Rush? Sadly, it appears, only where Rush is concerned. Later, on the same show, he turned his MacLainesque balm of self-love into a vitriolic attack on liberals. "[T]he problem with liberals," he explained, "is that they don't like themselves. . . . All this phoniness, all this reaching out, all this: 'Please like me, please, we're not that bad, please, we don't want to hurt you, please get along with us.' It's not possible, my friends, because they don't like themselves. . . . We're not trying to establish intimacy with [liberals]. We want to crush them." Now that sounds more familiar. (Thanks to the *Chicago Tribune*'s Eric Zorn for capturing this nonsense.)

ENERGY BULL

FOR MONTHS, CONGRESSIONAL Democrats have fumed, with ample justification, that Republican leaders imperiously shut them out of the legislative process (see Michael Crowley, "Oppressed Minority," June 23). As Democratic Representative John Dingell memorably put it, "Democrats are like mushrooms. . . . We're kept in the dark and fed horseshit." But the GOP's unilateralism reached new heights this week as Congress approved the most significant energy bill in a decade. After the House and Senate passed different versions of the legislation, a handful of Republican leaders dramatically reshaped it behind closed doors, adding entirely new provisions, such as language weakening some urban clean-air requirements, and rejecting an effort to repeal tax credits for the purchase of fuel-guzzling luxury SUVs. Although conference committees are, in theory, supposed to be bipartisan, Democrats were invited only to two token hearings where, needless to say, almost nothing of substance was decided. After weeks of secrecy, Republicans finally disgorged the 1,200-page bill at nearly 3 a.m. on Tuesday morning. That same day, the House voted on the bill after a mere hour of floor debate. Such haste gave Democrats almost no chance to scrutinize the legislation's fine print, wherein lie dozens of pork-barrel projects added as legislative favors to GOP members—including a $120 million indoor rainforest entertainment center in Iowa. Word is Democrats might filibuster the bill. At least that would give them a chance to read it.

A DEMOCRATIC PARTY NO MORE

LORD KNOWS THERE ARE PLENTY OF issues on which the Democrats might reasonably move to the right. But it's hard to figure out on what issues Zell Miller *doesn't* think the Democrats should move to the right. In his book, *A*

DAVID COWLES

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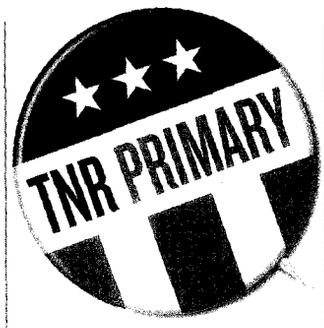
National Party No More, the retiring Georgia senator advises Democrats (of which he is technically one) to adopt conservative positions on social issues (he's anti-abortion and supported the nominations of Ted Olson and John Ashcroft), foreign policy ("I say, bomb the hell out of them. If there's collateral damage, so be it. They found our citizens to be expendable," he said of Afghanistan two years ago), and economics (he sponsored the Bush tax cut and later criticized it as too small). Without knowing the Democratic nominee or platform, he has already endorsed President Bush. A sense of who Miller's book is actually aimed at can be gleaned from the blurbs on the back—the authors being GOP loyalists Sean Hannity, Robert Novak, Newt Gingrich, Lawrence Kudlow, and Jack Kemp. Many on the Democratic Party's left like to caricature moderates as urging their party to look exactly like the GOP. In Miller's case, the caricature actually seems to be true.

FREEDOM'S JUST ANOTHER WORD

"THE TRADITION OF FREE SPEECH exercised with enthusiasm is alive and well here in London. . . . They now have that right in Baghdad as well."
—President Bush, during a visit to England, November 19

"As many as 5,000 police will protect Bush [from protesters] during the visit, at a cost of nearly $9 million."—*The Washington Post*, November 19

"American soldiers handcuffed and firmly wrapped masking tape around an Iraqi man's mouth after they arrested him for speaking out against occupation troops. Asked why the man had been arrested and put into the back of a Humvee vehicle on Tahrir Square, the commanding officer told Reuters at the scene, . . . 'This man has been detained for making anti-coalition statements.' He refused to say what the man said."
—Reuters, November 11 ■



SPACE-SAVER
Candidate: Wesley Clark
Category: General Likeability
Grade: A

It has been said that Wesley Clark is insufferably arrogant, a man happiest in front of the mirror. So you might think that his lengthy new autobiography, *Winning Modern Wars*, would take the time to detail one of the most heroic moments of his life—an episode *The Boston Globe* recounted in a recent profile. The *Globe*'s Michael Kranish describes how Clark responded in 1995 when a French armored personnel carrier, part of a convoy Clark was riding into Sarajevo, plunged off a mountain road. "Suddenly, shooting broke out, followed by explosions," Kranish writes. "The noise may have been Serbian gunners, or the munitions in the French vehicle, or both." Clark, then a senior general, didn't flinch. "Clark found a rope, tied it around a tree, and rappelled to the burning vehicle," Kranish continues. " 'Bring a fire extinguisher!' Clark yelled, according to [Richard] Holbrooke's account, but none could be found."

Clark couldn't save any lives—he returned from the ravine to report that the casualties below were "the worst thing you've ever seen." But the point here is not so much Clark's bravery. It's how he treats the incident in his book. It's true that Clark's campaign ads trumpet his courage under fire, but, when his image isn't being managed by political operatives, Clark seems decidedly more humble. As Kranish puts it, "It was one of the most extraordinary, difficult, and dangerous days of Clark's life. Yet in his 479-page autobiography, Clark devotes less than one paragraph to it. In an interview, . . . Clark explained that Holbrooke had described the event already, and that he had some space constraints in his autobiography." What insufferable arrogance! —Michael Crowley

IT'S THE PRINCIPLE
Candidate: Joe Lieberman
Category: Political Courage
Grade: A

Joe Lieberman's campaign may be going nowhere fast, but you have to admire the Connecticut senator's stubborn adherence to his principles. Yesterday, he refused to join the rest of the Democratic presidential field in opposing the Republican Medicare bill. It's not difficult to understand why Democrats are apoplectic about the legislation: After all, it steals one of their most potent domestic issues heading into an election year. But, of course, in doing so, the bill does deliver the prescription-drug benefit that Democrats have spent years fighting for—which is why the AARP, traditionally aligned with Democrats, has endorsed it.

Lieberman has not yet announced whether he plans to vote for the Medicare bill. But, by not opposing it right off the bat, he at least gives the appearance that he's going to think a little bit before he decides whether to abandon his principles for the sake of political expediency. And, at this point, Lieberman's principles are about all his campaign has going for it. —Jason Zengerle

THE OLD COLLEGE TRY
Candidate: Howard Dean
Category: Domestic Policy
Grade: C

Howard Dean's education plan gets points for having its heart in the right place. Something drastic needs to be done about access to higher education in this country, and the Bush administration has only made matters worse by cutting Pell Grants and other forms of financial aid. Meanwhile, tuitions continue to climb at astounding rates. For many working-class families, college is simply too expensive.

But Dean's proposal, unveiled in a speech at Dartmouth, isn't the solution. The gist of the plan is a $7 billion infusion of financial aid, primarily in the form of $10,000 loan/grant packages to students who pledge in eighth grade to prepare for college. Leaving aside the fact that many middle-schoolers have no idea what they'll be doing next summer, let alone in five years, Dean's plan amounts to an enormous sop to America's colleges and universities, without any accompanying check on tuition inflation—say, a cap on yearly increases. Manchester's *The Union-Leader* got it right when it compared Dean's plan to the country's third-party-payer health system. "The easy availability of government-financed student loans and grants has enabled colleges and universities to raise their prices year after year without losing customers," the paper editorialized. "What was intended as the solution has instead magnified the problem."

—Clay Risen

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CARICATURES BY ZACH TRENHOLM

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Campaign Journal

Air War

BY RYAN LIZZA

THE 30-SECOND political ad has a bad reputation. Political scientists argue that it has reduced civic participation. Pundits complain that it has coarsened political discourse. Campaign finance reformers try to limit its influence. And pretty much everyone says it has made candidates, voters, and reporters all a little more stupid. But, for all the talk about how television has destroyed politics, there is nothing more useful for divining what a candidate is about—or at least what he wants voters to think he is about—than the much-maligned 30-second TV spot. Like a bumper sticker, it forces each candidate to distill his message down to its core.

This week, Wesley Clark, as his website announced, "entered the television ad battle." That means that all six major candidates now have commercials running, and the air war has officially begun. "We are entering the period where paid media is going to control the dialogue," says an aide to one candidate. During this phase, the campaigns will spend as much time—sometimes more—publicizing their ad rollouts as they will unveiling new policy initiatives. Scripts will be e-mailed out, and streaming video will be posted on the Web. The campaigns' media gurus will conduct conference calls with reporters to explain the semiotics behind each new spot. And fund-raising appeals will be built around the release of particular ads. (Clark is already trying to raise $220,000 to keep his ad on the air in New Hampshire.) While voters in Iowa and New Hampshire still fetishize personal contact over televised appeals, the nationwide crush of primaries scheduled for February lends unprecedented importance to TV ads this year, making the 30-second spot an ideal way to understand the state of the presidential race nine weeks before the voting begins.

THE MOST TELLING new ad is Howard Dean's attack on Dick Gephardt in Iowa. It opens with footage of the congressman standing alongside Trent Lott and George W. Bush at a Rose Garden signing ceremony. The announcer intones, "October 2002. Dick Gephardt agrees to co-author the Iraq war resolution, giving George Bush the authority to go to war." An ad like this clarifies a couple of things. First, Dean sees Gephardt as his biggest obstacle to winning the nomination. Dean's strategy in Iowa is to spend Gephardt into oblivion. Dean is running a national campaign with a large war chest and, because he is rejecting federal matching funds, no state spending caps. Gephardt is basically running a single-state campaign with few resources and within the limits of the state spending caps. Even if Gephardt wins Iowa, Dean is trying to ensure that he is virtually penniless on his way to New Hampshire. The second thing Dean's ad clarifies is that, his frequent protestations notwithstanding, he still sees his opposition to the Iraq war as his most powerful weapon in the primaries. At various points in the campaign, Dean has argued that his message is about more than being antiwar and anti-Bush. In an interview back in March, Dean told me he was leaving behind the war as an issue to refocus his campaign on health insurance. It never happened. Every time Dean is challenged, he returns to his magical formula of attacking the war and the Democrats who authorized Bush to wage it.

Gephardt aides describe Dean's spot melodramatically as "the first negative ad in Iowa Democratic caucus history." Of course, the Gephardt campaign will respond in kind. "We are going to kill him on Medicare and trade," an aide says. For now, their ads are focusing on trade. (Hammering Dean on his previous support for slowing the growth of Medicare is sure to follow at some point: It was Gephardt's disciplined attacks on this flank that probably cost Dean his lead in the Hawkeye State.) One new Gephardt ad features the candidate sitting around a kitchen table talking to Iowans Olin and Barb Clayton. Olin explains that he has lost two jobs to Mexico. "Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt led the fight against NAFTA," an announcer says. "As president, Dick Gephardt will fight for American jobs." As the race heads into the holidays, the Dean-Gephardt battle in Iowa will be its central drama, and the candidates' ads neatly encapsulate the choice they're offering Iowans: support for jobs versus opposition to the war.

The knockdown, drag-out fight between Dean and Gephardt means an opportunity for Kerry. It's fashionable to declare Kerry dead in the wake of his campaign's early November meltdown. Even two weeks after what Kerry declared would be a one-day story, almost every campaign is still buzzing about the firing and resignations in the senator's camp. "I can't get enough," says a senior adviser to a Kerry rival. For those who haven't followed the story, the best summary I've heard goes like this: Kerry's campaign was divided into Team A (led by Jim Jordan, who wanted Kerry to attack Dean) and Team B (lead by Bob Shrum, who wanted Kerry to play statesman). Kerry chose the strategy of Team B. When it failed, he fired Team A. The silver lining in Kerry's tumble is that it is better to have hit rock bottom than to remain in constant freefall. And all the attention on his campaign turmoil exaggerates how bad things are for him. "The Washington press corps is focused on this campaign shakeup," says Gordon Fischer, chairman of the Iowa state Democratic Party. "That's not going to change one caucusgoer."

One might expect Kerry to be planting himself in New Hampshire in a last ditch effort to wrest the state back from Dean. But he has a more urgent task: saving himself from coming in fourth—i.e., last among the major candidates competing—in Iowa. So, this week, Kerry unveiled a new ad

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We fight crime.

We fight fires.

We fight to save lives.

And we're all fighting for the Consensus Plan.

In emergencies, clear and reliable communications are vital to save lives. No one is more acutely aware of this than police, firefighters, and emergency management officials — the first responders in an emergency. That's why a national coalition of public safety groups is asking the FCC to approve the Consensus Plan. The plan will virtually eliminate interference in the 800MHz band and give first responders the clear, dependable communications they need. Tell the FCC to approve the Consensus Plan to protect our nation's first responders and those they protect.

PROJECT CONSENSUS

Public Safety Coalition for Wireless Communications

www.projectconsensus.org

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in the state. His ad, too, reveals a central truth about his candidacy: that he still hasn't decided what it's all about. The ad talks about taking on special interests, which, Kerry aides insist, is the real, final, and true message of his campaign. (Don't hold your breath.) The ad is notable for one line: "I want to develop alternative fuels and more efficient cars. We'll create five hundred thousand new jobs, and we'll never have to send young Americans to war for Mideast oil." Not only does it capture the scattered nature of Kerry's message, it also sends yet another mixed signal about his vote for the war. Nevertheless, the Kerry campaign hopes Dean and Gephardt damage each other enough to create space for him to come back in Iowa. Expectations are now so low for him, Kerry aides acknowledge, that even a second-place finish could give him momentum going into New Hampshire.

NO CANDIDATE HAS put more faith in the TV ad than John Edwards. In 1998, he went from obscurity to North Carolina senator based largely on the power of his TV presence. He was counting on a similar formula this year. But, though he has been running ads since August, he has had little to show for it. In Iowa, he is now trying to seize the opening afforded by Kerry's implosion and Clark and Joe Lieberman's decisions to skip the caucuses, moves that may have created an opportunity for Edwards among more conservative Democrats in the west of the state. "He's really spent a lot of time organizing in Iowa's fifth congressional district, the western third of Iowa, represented by a right-wing nut named Steve King," says Fischer. "Edwards has a lot of staff there."

Edwards's ads have been the inverse of Dean's. While Dean never talks about his upbringing and has yet to flesh out a comprehensive governing philosophy, Edwards's first ads were soft biographical spots highlighting his humble roots, and his latest ads emphasize his policy proposals. Like no other candidate, Edwards has a laser-like focus on specific policies that affect Americans in their everyday lives, from health insurance for children to help with tuition costs to reducing the burden of consumer debt. The campaign has so much faith in the power of specificity that its latest commercial mocks the whole idea of the political ad. "John Edwards believes America's challenges require more than can be said in thirty-second ads," says the voice-over—somewhat ironically, given how kind the 30-second ad has been to the senator's career. The spot consists mostly of a quote from, er, THE NEW REPUBLIC, praising Edwards's domestic policy and offers viewers a phone number to order the senator's 64-page plan. It's the only advertisement in the race that's selling a briefing book. There is no evidence that it's working.

The newest ad in the race is also the most powerful. Watching the Clark campaign stumble throughout the autumn, it has been easy to forget that the whole rationale for his candidacy is his biography. His first ad attempts to correct this. "We're going to saturate New Hampshire with his bio over the next week or two weeks," says a Clark aide. The ad opens with footage of soldiers fighting in Vietnam—viewers have to look closely to realize that the images are stock footage and not Clark himself—while a voice-over intones, "The first bullet shattered his hand. The second and third hit his shoulder and leg. As he hit the jungle floor, he rallied the troops and directed the fire fight." After this, we learn that Clark "stopped a campaign of terror" (in Kosovo), "liberated a people" (ditto), and "speaks four languages." It's probably the first ad to elevate multilingualism to a campaign issue. But it does a better job explaining why Clark is in the race than his nine weeks of uninspired campaigning. Wes Clark is a big stud and a smart guy, the ad tells us. And, for now, that's all you need to know. ■

Baghdad Dispatch

Insecure

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

THE REPORT BEGAN to percolate through the hallways of Baghdad's Al Hamra Hotel in the late afternoon, and, by early evening, the clientele was in a panic. Officials at the Australian Embassy down the road had picked up reliable intelligence that Iraqi insurgents were planning to carry out an imminent "armed assault" against the ten-story hotel, a gathering point for foreigners. Between a dozen and 20 men with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades would attack the heavily fortified building before dawn one morning between November 1 and November 15, kill the Iraqi guards, and move through the hallways gunning down journalists as they slept. It was the second warning to reach the Al Hamra in a week—the other had been vaguer—and it emptied the hotel within hours. Frightened correspondents pulled their satellite dishes off the rooftop and scrambled into private houses—more vulnerable targets, perhaps, but far less obtrusive ones.

These are times of panic and paranoia in Baghdad. The wave of suicide bombings that peaked with simultaneous explosions in front of three police stations and the Red Cross on October 27 has shattered nerves and radically altered the city's landscape. Hotels, government ministries, police stations, and other structures associated with the U.S. occupation have been cordoned off behind razor wire and concrete. Entire neighborhoods now lie within tightly guarded perimeters, including the "Green Zone," a five-kilometer, walled-off square near the Tigris River encompassing the Al Rashid Hotel and Saddam Hussein's Repub-

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lican Palace, headquarters of the U.S.-occupation staff. "Rumint," unsubstantiated intelligence, has become the major currency in Baghdad, and every day people disseminate unsettling bulletins assessing danger levels and enumerating attacks. Days after I landed in Baghdad last month, rumint spread that insurgents armed with shoulder-fired missiles had come close to hitting a cargo plane operated by DHL on its approach to Baghdad International Airport. This news caused a steep drop in the number of passengers flying in and out of the capital.

Yet the rising fear in Baghdad has been good news for at least one group: the huge number of private security companies selling their services to foreign workers. The crowded field has sparked a competition that can get nasty—leading to inflated reports of danger that serve primarily to stir up more business.

EVERY SENSITIVE FACILITY in Baghdad is now protected by its own private army. A homegrown Iraqi security force guards the Green Zone; the U.S. company Custer Battles handles the airport. Global Risk Strategies, a British company, now has over 1,000 security personnel in Iraq. Overall, at least 20 Western security companies have set up shop in the country, and new contingents are arriving daily, some of them exotic. My Royal Jordanian flight into Baghdad was packed with retired Nepalese Gurkhas hired by the huge U.S. contractor Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), a Halliburton subsidiary. Now these tough-looking men stand guard with machine guns on nearly every floor at the Palestine Hotel, where some of the KBR crowd is holed up. A friend who works as a private contractor for USAID protects his house in Baghdad with 18 *peshmerga*—Kurdish warriors whom he lured south from Erbil and equipped with guns. He pays each of them about $200 per month, a bargain compared with the going rate for Western companies: $1,500 per guard per day.

The total market for these security companies is enormous. The *Financial Times* estimates that "contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars have been handed out in Iraq to private security companies." One contract alone, awarded last month to the British security firm Erinys to protect oil installations, was worth nearly $40 million.

With such high stakes, the companies compete intensely for clients. *Newsweek* decided to leave the Al Hamra earlier this month and move into a house owned by a British private security firm made up of former SAS commandos. The commandos lived in a villa tucked away on a side street in the affluent Al Mansour neighborhood, protected by a dozen armed guards, huge concrete blocks, and manned checkpoints. But *Newsweek* began to reassess the move after a rival security firm, Centurion Risk Assessment Services, assured the magazine's reporters that it had beefed up security at the Al Hamra Hotel and that there was now an "extremely low risk of an armed assault."

John, the pistol-packing counterterrorism specialist who was going to lease the house to *Newsweek*, snorted at the idea that the Centurion had declared the Al Hamra secure. "With all due respect, you're dealing with people who don't know about terrorism," John said. Centurion, he explained, are all ex–Royal Marines—"conventional soldiers." "We're all SAS. We're trained to think about terror." He scoffed at the security measures Centurion had put into place, including cordoning off the hotel with bombproof slabs. "They're missing the point," John said ominously. "Right now, members of the hotel staff could be building a bomb in the Al Hamra basement, piece by piece. ... We know that the Al Hamra Hotel is going to be attacked. It's just a question of when."

John's alarming message caused *Newsweek* to return to the house idea, even though reporters discovered that John's own security precautions were less than perfect. John's gang, it turned out, had been so secretive about their identity that they had raised suspicions. "Everyone knows who lives in that house," an Iraqi watchman confided to a journalistic colleague one afternoon. "It's the CIA, right?" That kind of talk was almost certain to make the house a target for terrorists. "We probably should do something about that," one of these counterterrorism experts conceded to the same colleague.

For days, *Newsweek* remained on the fence. Then, one night, gunfire broke out just down the street from the Al Hamra. I threw on my flak jacket and lay on the floor, listening to the crackle of automatic weapons. Had the long-rumored armed assault begun? After 15 minutes of shooting, I crawled over to the hotel phone and called the reception desk. False alarm. The Iraqi national soccer team had defeated the North Korean squad, setting off wild celebrations. Still, *Newsweek* didn't press its luck. We moved into John's house in Al Mansour the next day. ■

The neocons' new old plan for Iraq.

Flashback

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

OVER THE PAST week, conservative discourse on Iraq has passed through the looking glass. *The Wall Street Journal*, which a few weeks ago was chastising liberals who employ the Vietnam analogy, opined that Americans should heed "the lesson of Vietnam, where anti-insurgency efforts improved sharply once General Creighton Abrams dropped the mantra of 'more troops' and adopted a strategy of Vietnamization"—a strategy that, in the absence of sustained U.S. support, culminated in the collapse of a demoralized South Vietnamese army. Pentagon adviser Richard Perle contends that sending more

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troops is unnecessary because Iraqi security forces "will do a better job of coping with the violence than we can do," while Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute argues against more American troops and in favor of arming Iraqis, who have been ruled until now by Americans "walled up in a compound in Baghdad, contemptuous of those swarthy, gesticulating folk on the outside."

Pletka's analysis is revealing. In explaining the Bush administration's decision to "Iraqify" security duties in Iraq, the media has focused on the White House's reelection concerns and Donald Rumsfeld's worry that the U.S. military has been stretched too thin. But, for Pletka and many other conservatives in and out of the administration, the rationale for Iraqification has little to do with 2004 or imperial overstretch. It derives instead from their peculiar brand of conservative theology.

That theology, which for decades has idealized foreign "freedom fighters" as nascent democrats in America's own image, remains an underappreciated factor in the Bush team's deliberations over Iraq. It has manifested itself in arguments between Pentagon officials and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which is dominated by State Department officials—who, along with CPA chief L. Paul Bremer, have argued against a rapid handover of security to Iraqis. It has even manifested itself in a split among neoconservatives, with officials who have worked closely with the Iraqi opposition arguing for Iraqification and those in the John McCain/Project for the New American Century orbit arguing that the strategy reflects a loss of will. For the Iraqifiers, however, this was the strategy all along.

"THE EXPECTATION THAT a competent Iraqi security force will quickly emerge," says Andrew Bacevich, a retired Army colonel and Boston University professor, "is the logical extension of the mindset that had the Iraqi people greeting us as liberators, and it is being encouraged by the same officials." In 2001, Pentagon officials touted a strategy for fighting the Iraq war along the lines of the Afghan war, with Iraqi opposition fighters led by Ahmed Chalabi substituting for the Northern Alliance. "It would be neither wise nor necessary for us to send ground forces into Iraq," Perle argued in 1998, "when patriotic Iraqis are willing to fight to liberate their own country." When the United States ultimately did send ground forces into Iraq, the Pentagon airlifted Chalabi and his followers onto the battlefield, convinced they would become what Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace described as the "core of the new Iraqi Army." Then, in May, Pentagon officials leaked a plan that would have reduced American troop levels to 30,000 by now. The original plan was premised on an influx of foreign troops, but it had a political logic as well. "If we still have 100,000 soldiers in Iraq at the end of the year, then this is no longer a liberation; it's just a military occupation," a Defense Department official told THE NEW REPUBLIC in April. Despite being lampooned as imperialists, many on the Bush team opposed a prolonged U.S. presence in Iraq nearly as much as they opposed a prolonged U.N. presence.

Few of those officials still tout Chalabi as Iraq's George Washington, but they remain the heirs and custodians of the Reagan Doctrine, whose romance for foreign revolutionaries led to the discovery of nascent Washingtons from Asia to Latin America. While their refusal to endorse order at the expense of liberty made sense in prewar Iraq, in a war-torn Iraq racked by violent insurrections where we *are* the status quo power, it does not. "Backing an insurgent movement is one thing," says Michael Vickers, a former Special Forces and CIA officer who played a key role in the Afghan insurgency during the 1980s, "but, in this case, having faith that our fair-haired proxies will triumph where Americans can't is just unrealistic." But realism no longer appears to be the point. Reviving his campaign for devolution, Newt Gingrich argues that American troops belong in a "backup role" while we should quickly cede authority to Iraqis, "even with some inherent disorder." Similarly, Heritage Foundation analyst James Phillips says that bringing in more American troops "could jeopardize our long-term goal to transfer authority" and could make the Iraqi government "more dependent on American power."

NONE OF THIS is to say the administration is wrong to put more Iraqi forces in the field. But that hardly requires a corresponding reduction in U.S. forces. Nor does it justify the conceit that poorly equipped, poorly trained, and poorly vetted Iraqi police will succeed where even crack American troops have not. The administration has accelerated the training program for Iraqi forces twice now, and some Iraqis have been thrown into firefights with only a week of preparation. The claim that putting an "Iraqi face" on security operations will diminish the attacks assumes that the resistance merely wants to end the occupation. But, as administration officials routinely point out, the United States is fighting the remnants of Saddam Hussein's security services—the "dead-enders" who have been targeting Iraqis as much as Americans and who will surely continue to do so, regardless of American troop levels. The conviction that Iraqification will solve this problem mirrors the delusion that plagues liberals who still argue that the answer is internationalization. Each side approaches Iraq from a different direction, but both end up in the same place: generating excuses to leave.

"As we learned in Vietnam," Senator McCain points out, "if we do not defeat them before we leave, our enemies will continue to fight until any government we help establish is destroyed." Intuitively, President Bush seems to understand this: "Leaving Iraq prematurely would only embolden the terrorists and increase the danger to America," Bush said earlier this month. This, however, is precisely the impression that a hasty timetable for withdrawal will create on the ground. Iraqis, we may soon discover, don't grasp the nuances of American conservatism. ■

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What Dick Cheney really believes.

The Radical

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN AND FRANKLIN FOER

In early 2002, Vice President Dick Cheney spoke to President George W. Bush from the heart. The war in Afghanistan had been an astonishing display of U.S. strength. Instead of the bloody quagmire many predicted, CIA paramilitary agents, Special Forces, and U.S. air power had teamed with Northern Alliance guerrillas to run the Taliban and Al Qaeda out of their strongholds. As a new interim government took power in Kabul, Cheney was telling Bush that the next phase in the war on terrorism was toppling Saddam Hussein.

Bush was well aware that several of his senior aides wanted to take the battle to Iraq. When his advisers had convened at Camp David the weekend after the September 11 attacks, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz argued on three separate occasions that the United States should immediately target Iraq instead of the more difficult Afghanistan. Bush had settled the matter by instructing his chief of staff, Andrew Card, to quiet Wolfowitz—a moment humiliatingly enshrined by Bob Woodward in his book *Bush at War*. But, in early 2002, Cheney dispensed with the policy arguments for taking down Saddam in favor of a far more personal appeal. He said simply that he had been part of the team that created what he now saw as a flawed policy—leaving Saddam in power at the end of the Gulf war—and now Bush had a chance to correct it.

His plea was enormously successful. "The reason that Cheney was able to sell Bush the policy is that he was able to say, 'I've changed,'" says a senior administration official. "'I used to have the same position as [James] Baker, [Brent] Scowcroft, *and your father*—and here's why it's wrong.'" By February, observes a since-departed senior National Security Council (NSC) staffer, "my sense was the decision was taken." The next month, Bush interrupted a meeting between national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and three senators to boast, "Fuck Saddam. We're taking him out."

That Cheney had become the decisive foreign policy player in the White House is hardly surprising. Bush had, after all, added him to the ticket precisely for his national security heft. What was astonishing—even to those who thought they knew Cheney well—was that Cheney had seemingly swung so strongly against the policies of the administration he loyally served as Defense secretary, an administration that valued stability above democracy-building and crisis management above grand strategy. "Look," confesses someone who has worked with Cheney in the past, "I am baffled."

It's easy to understand this bafflement. When Cheney signed on as Bush's running mate in 2000, many people expected him to bring George H.W. Bush's realist foreign policy instincts with him. *U.S. News & World Report* quickly dubbed him "BUSH'S BACK-TO-THE-FUTURE VEEP PICK." After all, Cheney had spent the latter half of the 1990s as CEO of one of the world's largest oil-services companies, where he argued against economic sanctions and for engagement with tyrannies like Iran. And Cheney had *not* spent the '90s—as his longtime ally Wolfowitz had—publicly agonizing over the decision to leave Saddam's regime intact.

But imparting George H.W. Bush's cautiousness to his former Defense secretary misreads Cheney entirely. Far from fitting into 41's foreign policy team, Cheney was its ideological outlier. On the greatest issue of the day—what to do about a declining Soviet Union and America's place in a unipolar world—Cheney dissented vigorously. His Pentagon argued, again and again, that the only true guarantee of U.S. security lay in transforming threatening nations into democratic ones—a radical notion to the realists in the first Bush White House. Cheney's policy allies were not national security adviser Scowcroft and Secretary of State Baker but rather a set of intellectuals on the Pentagon policy staff who shared and helped him refine his alternative vision of U.S. power and purpose. In the '90s, this worldview came to be known as neoconservatism. Cheney was there first.

As he fought an uphill ideological battle in the first Bush administration, Cheney's foreign policy vision was paired with a tendency that would prove key to understanding his performance in W.'s White House: a willingness to circumvent the typical bureaucratic channels to gain advantage over his rivals. In particular, Cheney came to see the intelligence establishment as flawed and corrupted by political biases hopelessly at odds with his goals. By 2001, when Cheney became the most powerful adviser to the president of the United States, his vision of global democracy and his mistrust of the CIA had reached full maturity. Both convictions would be brought to bear when the vice president turned his full attention to Iraq.

Similar Wavelengths

When Dick Cheney arrived at the Pentagon in 1989, he created a brain trust in his own image, cultivating young staffers with academic backgrounds like his own. These brainy types congregated in the highest ranks of the policy directorate run by then-Undersecretary Wolfowitz. In most administrations, the policy directorate largely deals with

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mundane tasks, such as the negotiation of basing rights and arms sales. Those issues held little interest for Wolfowitz and his team. "They focused on geostrategic issues," says one of his Pentagon aides. "They considered themselves conceptual." Wolfowitz and his protégés prided themselves on their willingness to reexamine entire precepts of U.S. foreign policy. In Cheney, they found a like-minded patron. Wolfowitz, in 1991, described his relationship with his boss to *The New York Times*: "Intellectually, we're very much on similar wavelengths." Nowhere was this intellectual synergy more evident than on the Soviet Union.

At the time Cheney took office, Mikhail Gorbachev had been in power for four years. By then, the Soviet premier had charmed the American media and foreign policy establishment with his ebullient style. Like many hard-liners, Cheney thought he saw through these atmospherics and publicly intimated his skepticism of perestroika. Appearing on CNN in April 1989—only one month into his term as Defense secretary—he glumly announced that Gorbachev would "ultimately fail" and a leader "far more hostile" to the West would follow. Such dourness put Cheney well outside the administration mainstream. Baker, Scowcroft, and President George H.W. Bush—as well as the NSC's leading Russia hand, Condoleezza Rice—had committed themselves to Gorbachev's (and the USSR's) preservation. But Cheney believed that, with a gust of aggressive support for alternatives to Gorbachev, the United States could dismember its principal adversary once and for all.

To craft an alternative strategy, Cheney turned to alternative experts. On Saturday mornings, Wolfowitz's deputies convened seminars in a small conference room in the Pentagon's E ring, where they sat Cheney in front of a parade of Sovietologists. Many were mavericks who believed the Soviet Union was on the brink of collapse. Out of these Saturday seminars, Cheney's Soviet position emerged—with concepts and rhetoric that perfectly echo the current Bush administration's Iraq policy. They would push regime change in the Soviet Union, transforming it into a democracy. Support for rebellious Ukraine would challenge the regime from its periphery; and support for Boris Yeltsin, the elected president of the Russian Republic, would confront the regime at its core. "[Yeltsin] represents a set of principles and values that are synonymous with those that we hold for the Soviet Union—democratization, demilitarization," Cheney announced in a 1991 appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press." Bush père and Scowcroft fretted about instability, but Cheney retorted, if the demolition of the Soviet Union required a little short-term disruption, such as a nuclear-armed Ukraine, then so be it. After all, as he observed in a 1992 speech to the Economics Club of Indianapolis, true security depended on the expansion of "the community of peaceful democratic nations."

Cheney was unsuccessful in pushing the White House away from Gorbachev. After he mused aloud about Gorbachev's shortcomings in a 1989 TV interview, Baker called Scowcroft and told him, "Dump on Dick with all possible alacrity." When the "Gang of Eight"—Bush's senior advisers—met to decide policy in the final days of the Soviet Union, the meetings featured, as CIA chief Robert Gates has recalled, "Cheney against the field." The Soviet collapse ultimately settled the issue. But Cheney's battle against realism had only begun.

THERE WAS, HOWEVER, a moment of détente in that battle: the Gulf war. Cheney accepted ending the war with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein still in power, as did all of Poppy's other senior advisers. (Not even Wolfowitz—now so associated with Saddam's toppling—dissented at the time.) The lasting effect of the war on Cheney, however, was less strategic and more bureaucratic: It shattered his faith in the CIA's ability to produce reliable intelligence.

When Saddam first began amassing troops on the Kuwaiti border in mid-1990, conventional wisdom in the U.S. intelligence community held that he was attempting to gain leverage in OPEC talks and, at the most, might seize a Kuwaiti oil field. The analysis made little sense—Saddam was moving his elite Republican Guard units, the very guarantors of his rule, from their Baghdad positions—yet only a few analysts issued starker warnings of an all-out invasion. Worse still, a National Intelligence Estimate released just before Christmas that year concluded that Saddam would withdraw from Kuwait to avert a war with the United States. In a paper for a 1994 conference on intelligence policy, Wolfowitz reflected, "[W]hen the signs started to turn up that the projected scenario regarding Iraqi behavior was not unfolding as we wished, ... somebody within the [intelligence] community should have said, 'Wait a minute, here are facts that we ought to take some account of.' "

Cheney saw little option at the time but to request thorough briefings from intelligence analysts and subject their judgments to as much scrutiny as he could muster. Before the Gulf war, one former analyst remembers being "whisked into a room, there's Dick Cheney, he's right in front of you, he starts firing questions at you, half an hour later and thirty questions later, I'm whisked out of the room, and I'm like, 'What the hell just happened?' " Yet analysts can distinguish between thorough questioning and contempt—or pressure. Cheney showed none of it. "He would ask you factual questions like, 'OK, about this thing you said. Do I understand you correctly that such-and-such is true? And are you sure about this, and how do you know that?' " recalls Patrick Lang, the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) Middle East expert during the Gulf war and one of the few analysts to predict the invasion of Kuwait. "And I regard that as a legitimate question. ... He wasn't hostile or nasty about it; he just wanted to know how you knew. And I didn't mind that in the least."

But, as Cheney and his aides watched, the intelligence failures kept on mounting. In the fall of 1992, U.N. inspectors uncovered an Iraqi nuclear weapons program far more advanced than the intelligence community had sus-

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pected. More disturbingly, the CIA admitted to having no clue about the Soviet Union's massive clandestine biological weapons program, which Yeltsin had spontaneously acknowledged in 1992—and this was an enemy the Agency had studied carefully for decades. Gradually, Cheney and his staff came to consider the CIA not only inept but lazy, unimaginative, and arrogant—"a high priesthood" in their derisive terminology. With uncharacteristic vitriol, Wolfowitz's 1994 paper argued that the Agency's style "allows [analysts] to conceal ignorance of facts, policy bias or any number of things that may lie behind the personal opinions that are presented as sanctified intelligence judgments."

By the time Cheney arrived at Halliburton in the mid-'90s, he felt he could no longer rely on his old Langley connections to provide him the information he needed to do business in the former Soviet Union. So, according to one ex-CIA operative, Cheney hired a team of retired intelligence agents to collect information independently. The ex-agent says, "Cheney would just bitch and moan about the CIA and various parts of the world that they didn't know shit [about]. ... He was terribly frustrated."

BUT, WHILE THE decision to leave Saddam in power at the end of the Gulf war would reverberate through neocon circles for the next decade, a policy initiative devised by Cheney's Pentagon in 1992 would be arguably more important, laying the foundation for every major theme of George W. Bush's post–September 11 foreign policy. Under Wolfowitz's direction, the Pentagon produced a strategy paper called the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG). At a moment of strategic uncertainty—the Soviet Union had formally collapsed just months before—the document offered a vision of unbridled U.S. dominance and proposed democratization as the only true guarantor of U.S. security.

Without a Soviet Union to contain, there was no longer any obvious reason for the United States to retain its outsized presence on the world stage. To meet domestic expectations for a "peace dividend," Cheney implemented force reductions across all the armed services. But the Defense secretary and his planning staff also saw danger in these cuts. It was impossible to predict the next global rival to the United States, and, without the forward presence to encourage and cement democratization in newly freed nations, the gains of a unipolar world could be short-lived. A new conceptual framework to justify U.S. leadership was necessary.

DPGs typically explain how the Pentagon plans to implement defense requirements. They traffic in the minutiae of weapons systems and force structures, not reconceived notions of global leadership. But, just as Wolfowitz had used a modest policy office for grander ambitions, in February 1992 his staff drafted a DPG, advocating a value-driven security policy. It would be a U.S. priority to "encourage the spread of democratic forms of government." The stakes, they said, were extremely high. Everywhere the DPG authors looked, they saw the prospects for rivalry: in Russia, where there was "the possibility that democracy will fail"; in "Indian hegemonic aspiration"; in communist Asia, "with fundamental values, governance and policies decidedly at variance with our own"; even in allied Europe.

Instead of passively accepting the emergence of such rivals, the DPG proposed snuffing them out. Washington needed to convince other countries that "they need not aspire to a greater [global] role," whether through "account[ing] sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations" or through traditional deterrence. By preventing the emergence of a rival, U.S. strategy could recreate itself for a unipolar world, where U.S. power could be used more freely. "We have the opportunity to meet threats at lower levels and lower costs," the document read. Chief among those threats was the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). A full decade before George W. Bush enshrined preemption as state policy in his National Security Strategy, the DPG raised the prospect of "whether to take military steps to prevent the development or use of weapons of mass destruction."

It was uncharted territory for the United States, and it alarmed certain Pentagon officials, who leaked drafts of the DPG to *The New York Times*. Cheney, Wolfowitz, and their staffs awoke on March 8, 1992, to the headline "U.S. STRATEGY PLAN CALLS FOR ENSURING NO RIVALS DEVELOP." A horrified Senator Joseph Biden said the DPG led the way to "literally a Pax Americana." George H. W. Bush immediately disassociated himself from the document, begging the press corps, "Please do not put too much emphasis on leaked reports, particularly ones that I haven't seen." The White House strongly indicated its displeasure to the Defense secretary.

Cheney was forced to revise the document, sanding down its edges considerably, but he did not let its ideas perish. In January 1993, as they were about to leave office, Wolfowitz's planning staff recycled all the controversial ideas in the DPG and published them in a document called the Regional Defense Strategy. Again, the strategy was based on the concept of "a democratic 'zone of peace,'" defined as "a community of democratic nations bound together in a web of political, economic and security ties." It remained the task of American leadership "to build an international environment conducive to our values." The fact that the DPG vision didn't die a quiet, bureaucratic death wasn't just a tribute to the tenacity of Wolfowitz and his staff; it was a reflection of how deeply Cheney believed in it.

To this day, his closest aides point to the document as the moment when Cheney's foreign policy coalesced. The attacks of September 11 may have given Cheney a new sense of urgency, but the framework was already there. As one former staffer puts it, "It wasn't an epiphany, it wasn't a sudden eureka moment; it was an evolution, but it was one that

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was primed by what he had done and seen in the period during the end of the cold war."

All The Vice President's Men

CHENEY'S IDEOLOGY HARDLY made a dent in the first Bush White House. But, in the second, George W. Bush tasked him with a robust foreign policy portfolio. To ensure his ideas won out, the new vice president reassembled the intellectuals he had relied on in Wolfowitz's policy operation. Stephen Hadley, who had worked on arms control for the Wolfowitz policy staff, became deputy national security adviser. Zalmay Khalilzad, another policy aide, took over the NSC's Middle East portfolio. Others Cheney kept for his own staff. I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Wolfowitz's deputy, particularly rose in influence. In addition to becoming the vice president's chief of staff, he became Cheney's national security adviser and an adviser to the president himself. For his White House deputy, Libby tapped Eric Edelman, the Pentagon's top Sovietologist and organizer of the Saturday seminars. They brought in John Hannah, who had championed the anti-Gorbachev case at the Bush 41 State Department, to handle Middle East affairs. With a nod from Wolfowitz, they recruited a Navy officer, William Luti—who had advised former House Speaker Newt Gingrich—to work with Hannah.

Cheney didn't reconvene the group out of nostalgia. During the transition to the new administration, the NSC had been stocked with wonks from State and the CIA, and hawks felt ideologically frozen out of the new president's foreign policy staff. Other neocons—including Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of State John Bolton—were stuck a rung lower on the bureaucracy than their comrades felt they deserved. "A lot of people didn't end up at State and NSC and DOD [Department of Defense]," one senior administration hawk says. "Scooter tried to find a home for them." Cheney's office came to be viewed as the administration's neocon sanctuary.

The Office of the Vice President (OVP) was more than a consolation prize. Cheney gave his national security staff far greater responsibilities than had traditionally been accorded the vice president's team. His regional specialists wouldn't be involved only in issues relevant to the vice president—they would participate fully in the policy-making process and attend almost every interagency meeting. When Cheney first created this new structure, some Bushies openly described the operation as a "shadow" NSC. For those in the NSC itself, it often seemed like the "shadow" had more power than the real deal. One former Bush official says, "In this case, it's often the vice president's office that's driving the policy, leading the debate, leading the arguments, instead of just hanging back and recognizing that the vice president is not supposed to be driving the policy."

Not only was the OVP staff familiar, so were their ideas. Even before September 11, 2001, Cheney's staff was convinced Iraq could be a democratic outpost in the region—much as they had hoped Ukraine would become—albeit through a U.S.-funded insurgency, not an invasion. According to his aides, Cheney had grown more convinced throughout the '90s of the futility of containing Saddam. In the early '90s, while Cheney was holed up at the American Enterprise Institute, his think-tank colleagues say he met Ahmed Chalabi and increasingly lent the Iraqi National Congress (INC) leader a sympathetic ear. In July 2000, Chalabi delighted over Cheney's vice-presidential nomination, boasting, "Cheney is good for us." He was right. Within two weeks of Bush's inauguration, Cheney helped free U.S. INC funding that had been bottlenecked during the Clinton administration. At the senior staff meetings, which considered Iraq policy almost every week during the first few months of the administration, Cheney's office supported efforts to topple Saddam through empowering the INC even further. According to former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Edward Walker, a regular attendee at those meetings, Cheney seemed increasingly exasperated with his options. "Everything that had been tried before didn't work. By a system of elimination—sanctions won't stop him, bombing won't stop him, and so on—you come down to the last resort: Then we'll have to take him out."

The attacks of September 11 violently accelerated Cheney's nascent vision of a democratic Middle East. As the ruins of the Twin Towers smoldered, Cheney decided the administration needed to change the strategic framework that had left the nation vulnerable to mass murder. He unveiled his thinking at the first NSC meeting after the attack. "To the extent we define our task broadly, including those who support terrorism, then we get at states," Cheney said, according to Bob Woodward's account of the meeting. The night before, Bush had told the nation he would make "no distinction" between Al Qaeda and its state sponsors. Cheney was pushing the president's reasoning to its next stage. As a friend recollects, Cheney now understood that "what you had to do was transform the Middle East."

But, if Cheney realized that the Middle East needed to be recast, he also believed that one of the nation's most important instruments for doing so—its intelligence community—was badly broken. An intelligence failure on the scale of September 11, in the view of the vice president and his staff, merely confirmed the OVP's already dim estimation of the CIA. Before the attacks, Cheney had mused about the centrality of intelligence to national security, telling *The New Yorker*'s Nicholas Lemann in May 2001, "You need to have very robust intelligence capability if you're going to uncover threats to the U.S., and hopefully thwart them before they can be launched." Now there could be no confidence in the predictive capabilities of the country's intelligence services. Both lessons—the need to force a strategic realignment in the Middle East and the unreliability of normal intelligence channels—had deep roots in Cheney's Pentagon experience.

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In mid-2002, Cheney made at least two visits to the CIA's Langley headquarters to talk with the analysts on the intelligence assembly line, who warned that they had no evidence showing that Saddam was reconstituting his nuclear program. These visits have been chewed over in the press, decried by retired Agency officials, and condemned as attempts to pressure the CIA into producing more damning intel. But they only begin to capture the depth of the vice president's personal involvement in shaping Iraq intelligence. In addition to trekking to Langley, his former aides say, Cheney paid calls to analysts at the DIA, the National Security Agency, and even the National Intelligence Mapping Agency. "He visited every element of the intelligence community," says a former Cheney staffer. When he wasn't visiting these agencies, his staff snowed them with questions. According to one former CIA analyst, "The Agency [would write] something on WMD, and it would come back from the vice president with a thousand questions: 'What's this sentence mean?' 'What's your source for this line?' 'Why are you disregarding sources that are saying the opposite?' "

Among Cheney's aides, resentment of the CIA went far beyond a healthy skepticism of fallible intelligence analysts and an Agency with a decidedly mixed record. Whereas Cheney's questioning of intelligence during the Gulf war had been probing but respectful, now his staff belittled the intelligence community's findings, irrespective of their merits. For years, Libby and Hannah in particular had believed the Agency harbored a politically motivated animus against the INC and irresponsibly discounted intelligence reports from defectors the INC had brought forward. "This had been a fight for such a long period of time, where people were so dug in," reflects a friend of one of Cheney's senior staffers. The OVP had been studying issues like Iraq for so many years that it often simply did not accept that contrary information provided by intelligence analysts—especially CIA analysts—could be correct. As one former colleague of many OVP officials puts it, "They so believed that the CIA were wrong, they were like, 'We want to *show* these fuckers that they are wrong.' "

Intelligence analysts saw little difference between Cheney and his staffers. The vice president's aides may have made more trips to Langley and signed more memoranda asking for further information, but, as the CIA saw it, the OVP was a coordinated machine working for its engineer. "When I heard complaints from people, it was, 'Man, you wouldn't believe this shit that Libby and [Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J.] Feith and Wolfowitz do to us.' They were all lumped together," says an ex-analyst close to his former colleagues. "I would hear them say, 'Goddamn, that fucking John Hannah, you wouldn't believe.' And the next day it would be, 'That fucking Bill Luti.' For all these guys, they're interchangeable." Adds another, "They had power. Authority. They had the vice president behind them. ... What Scooter did, Cheney made possible. Feith, Wolfowitz—Cheney made it all possible. He's the fulcrum. He's the one."

From the OVP's perspective, the CIA—with its caveat-riddled position on Iraqi WMD and its refusal to connect Saddam and Al Qaeda—was an outright obstacle to the invasion of Iraq. And, as Cheney and his staff remembered so vividly from their Pentagon days, the CIA was often wrong on the biggest security questions. So Cheney reverted to the intelligence-gathering method he had perfected at Halliburton: He outsourced. Even before September 11, 2001, Cheney had given his staff clear instructions to go beyond the typical information channels in the bureaucracy. "He very, very much did not want to be trapped inside the government bubble and only see intelligence reports and State Department cables and Department of Defense memos," an ex-staffer recounts. Escaping the bubble was often innocuous and intellectually healthy. The OVP arranged meetings for Cheney with Middle East experts, such as the University of Haifa's Amatzia Baram, Princeton's Bernard Lewis, and Johns Hopkins's Fouad Ajami, and it gave him documents, such as the U.N.'s 2002 Arab Human Development Report, which pointed to tyranny as the source of the region's problems.

But Cheney's office didn't escape the government bubble so much as create a new one. Any doubts expressed by the intelligence community about the OVP's sources, especially Chalabi, were ignored. During his stint as an adviser to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Hannah had been one of the Clinton administration's most fervent INC supporters. Working for Cheney, he stayed in regular contact with the exile group. "He relied on Ahmed Chalabi for insights and advice," says a former Bush administration official. Cheney himself became an increasingly vocal Chalabi advocate. At an NSC meeting in the fall of 2002, the State Department and Pentagon feuded over releasing even more funding to the INC. In a rare burst of open influence, Cheney "weighed in, in a really big way," according to a former NSC staffer. "He said, 'We're getting ready to go to war, and we're nickel-and-diming the INC at a time when they're providing us with unique intelligence on Iraqi WMD.' " To the OVP, the CIA's hostility to such "unique" INC intelligence was evidence of the Agency's political corruption. Before long, "there was something of a willingness to give [INC-provided intelligence] greater weight" than that offered by the intelligence community, says the former administration official.

Chalabi was not the only source Hannah used to get alternative information to Cheney. In 2001, Luti had moved from the OVP to across the Potomac to become Feith's deputy for Near East and South Asia (NESA). By late 2002, Luti's Iraq desk became the Office of Special Plans (OSP), tasked with working on issues related to the war effort. In addition to actual planning, the OSP provided memoranda to Pentagon officials recycling the most damaging—and often the most spurious—intelligence about Iraq's Al Qaeda connections and the most hopeful predictions about liberated Iraq. In the fall of 2002, one of the memos stated as fact that September 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta had met in

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Prague with an Iraqi intelligence agent months before the attacks—a claim the FBI and CIA had debunked months earlier after an exhaustive investigation. And the OSP didn't just comb through old intelligence for new information. It had its own sources. For example, one of Luti's aides, a Navy lieutenant commander named Youssef Aboul-Enein, was tasked with scouring Arabic-language websites and magazines to come up with what Aboul-Enein would call "something really useful"—statements by Saddam praising the September 11 attacks, Palestinian suicide bombings, or any act of terrorism.

According to those who worked in NESA, Luti's efforts had a specific customer: Cheney. "Cheney's the one with the burr under his saddle about Iraq," says retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski, who worked for Luti from May 2002 until the eve of the war. During that time, Luti held only about six or seven staff meetings, she says, and "I heard Scooter Libby's name mentioned in half those meetings." Discussing Iraq, Luti would say "things like, 'Did you give something to Scooter?' 'Scooter called; hey, call him back,' ... [or] 'Oh, well, did you talk to Scooter about that?'" And Luti would make trips across the Potomac to see his old colleagues at the OVP. White House officials would often see Luti disappearing into Hannah's office before going on to Libby's.

The OVP didn't just generate this information for themselves. They tried to pump it back into the intelligence pipeline on visits to Langley. "Scooter and the vice president come out there loaded with crap from OSP, reams of information from Chalabi's people" on both terrorism and WMD, according to an ex-CIA analyst. One of the OVP's principal interlocutors was Alan Foley, director of the CIA's Nonproliferation Center. Cheney's office pelted Foley with questions about Iraq's nuclear weapons program—especially about Saddam's alleged attempts to purchase uranium from Niger. According to a colleague, Foley "pushed back" by "stressing the implausibility of it." Months earlier, after all, former Ambassador Joseph Wilson had gone to Niger at the behest of the CIA—a visit that had itself been instigated by questions raised by Cheney in an Agency briefing—and concluded that the sale almost certainly did not occur. But Cheney kept pressing, and it took its toll on Foley. "He was bullied and intimidated," says a friend of Foley.

In the view of many at Langley, the OVP wasn't simply highlighting what it considered weaknesses in CIA analysis. Rather, it was trying to stifle information that it considered counterproductive to the case for war. The tone of the questioning, some analysts felt, was less inquisitive than hostile. "It was done along the lines of: 'What's wrong with you bunch of assholes? You don't know what's going on, you're horribly biased, you're a bunch of pinkos,'" says a retired analyst close to his active-duty colleagues. Some analysts saw the questioning as a method of diverting overtaxed CIA analysts from producing undesired intelligence product. On one occasion, officials asked analysts hard at work on Iraq to produce a paper on the history of the British occupation of Mesopotamia following World War I. The request might seem reasonable on the surface—after all, an occupation ought to be informed by precedent. But policymakers in the OVP and the DOD could just as easily have picked up histories of Iraq from the library and let the CIA go back to work on classified analysis. But, after enduring the questioning for months, an ex-analyst explains, "It gets to the point where you just don't want to fight it anymore."

EVENTUALLY THE OVP'S alternative analyses found their way into the administration's public case for war. The distance between the OVP and the intelligence community was greatest on terrorism, and the OVP was determined to win. Libby wrote a draft of Colin Powell's February speech to the U.N. Security Council that outlined a far different threat than the secretary of State envisioned. "[The OVP] really wanted to make it a speech mostly about the link to terrorism," says one former NSC official. Although Powell and his staff balked at the most controversial—and poorly substantiated—details, Libby still provided the initial outline for the speech.

Cheney's own public statements went far beyond what the CIA and other intelligence agencies had verified. In an August 2002 speech in Nashville, Cheney asserted, "The Iraqi regime has in fact been very busy enhancing its capabilities in the field of chemical and biological agents, and they continue to pursue the nuclear program they began so many years ago." The intelligence community was in fact deeply divided over whether the nuclear program was again active, and a classified DIA report a month later indicated that the Agency had "no reliable information" about Iraq's chemical weapons program. But these doubts never seeped into Cheney's public statements. Days before the invasion, Cheney told NBC's Tim Russert on "Meet the Press," "We know [Saddam is] out trying once again to produce nuclear weapons, and we know that he has a longstanding relationship with ... the Al Qaeda organization." By contrast, the intelligence agencies assessed that, despite some apparently fruitless contact between Saddam's henchmen and Al Qaeda terrorists in Sudan in the mid-'90s, Iraq and Osama bin Laden were two unrelated threats.

The OVP never considered that it could be wrong, despite the fact that none of its senior members had intelligence training. The CIA, on the other hand, rather than behaving as a rigid and unshakable bastion of unquestionable truth, subjected its judgments to rigorous criticism. On Iraq, the CIA had what is known as the "red cell," a team of four highly regarded retired analysts who conducted alternative assessments of Iraq's ties to terrorism. The OVP, by contrast, put its judgments through no comparable wringer. Perhaps that is why so much of what they embraced was wrong. On the ground in Iraq today, there is no evidence that Saddam reconstituted his nuclear weapons

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program; according to chief American arms-hunter David Kay's interim report, the evidence of any ongoing chemical or biological weapons programs is fragmentary at best. A classified study prepared by the National Intelligence Council in early 2003 found that only one of Chalabi's defectors could be considered credible, THE NEW REPUBLIC has learned. A more recent investigation undertaken by the DIA has found that practically all the intelligence provided by the INC was worthless.

SEPTEMBER 14 WAS a difficult moment for the occupation of Iraq. In Falluja, a seat of unrest, Iraqis had finished burying ten security officers accidentally killed when soldiers from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment mistook them for guerrillas. One of their comrades, Ali Jassim, told a *New York Times* reporter that the United States was "training their guns on us. ... They came here to apply the occupier way—just like Saddam." That morning, Cheney returned to "Meet The Press" for his first TV interview since the war began. Despite repeated CIA warnings of postwar chaos, Cheney had insisted that the Iraqis would welcome American troops with open arms, and Russert reminded him that, on March 16, Cheney had flatly declared, "We will, in fact, be greeted as liberators." Instead, it seemed, Iraqis had decidedly mixed feelings about the occupation. A report by former Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre, initiated at the behest of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Iraq administrator L. Paul Bremer, had warned two months earlier, "The Iraqi population has exceedingly high expectations, and the window for cooperation may close rapidly."

Cheney was unfazed. "If you go out and look at what's happening on the ground, you'll find that there is widespread support," he responded. As evidence, he cited a poll conducted by John Zogby. "That's got very positive news in it in terms of the numbers it shows with respect to the attitudes to what Americans have done," he said. "One of the questions it asked is: 'If you could have any model for the kind of government you'd like to have'—and they were given five choices—'which would it be?' The U.S. wins hands down. If you want to ask them, do they want an Islamic government established, by two-to-one margins they say no, including the Shia population. If you ask how long they want Americans to stay, over sixty percent of the people polled said they want the U.S. to stay for at least another year."

Practically nothing Cheney said in his description of the poll—and the situation in Iraq—withstands scrutiny. When Iraqis were asked what model government they wanted, a breakaway plurality of 49 percent desired a democracy guided by Islamic law. The next closest contender, with 24 percent, was a clerical-dominated Islamic state. A secular, democratic Iraq—the closest choice to the U.S. model—garnered only 21 percent support. Over 60 percent of Iraqis wanted the United States and Britain to *leave* Iraq in a year; among Sunnis, the figure rose to 70 percent. Worse, fully half of Iraqis said they expected the United States to hurt their country over the next five years. Only 36 percent voiced faith that it would help. "One thing is clear," Zogby wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "the predicted euphoria of Iraqis has not materialized."

Cheney's dubious pronouncements on Iraq didn't end there. When asked if Iraq was involved in the September 11 attacks, Cheney said, "We don't know." He trotted out once more the canard that Atta met in Prague with an Iraqi intelligence agent—the same charge the OSP had continued to circulate even after the intelligence community debunked it. (Cheney's remark was so embarrassing to the administration that, three days later, Bush declared, "We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September 11.")

In short, nothing that has happened in Iraq over the last six months—the missing WMD, the mounting violence, the massive price tag—seems to have prompted any introspection among Cheney or his staff. They continue to carp about the hopelessly dovish bent of the CIA. "Some of these people—do they not have a political view on this?" exclaims a former Cheney staffer. "Did they support or oppose the war? Shouldn't that be factored into how they ended up judging [intelligence]?" In September, Cheney hired David Wurmser from the office of Bolton, the undersecretary of state for arms control. Recruiting Wurmser indicates Cheney's confidence in the approach to intelligence the OVP has taken from the start. After the September 11 attacks, Wurmser and his colleague Michael Maloof had been tasked by Feith to cull the intelligence community's amassed data on Iraq and Al Qaeda to find evidence of cooperation.

With Bush repeatedly affirming Cheney's place on the 2004 ticket, there is no evidence the vice president has reconsidered either the ideological vision that has taken him this far or the process he has used to implement it. And, of course, there are enormous foreign policy challenges remaining on the U.S. agenda: the nuclear crises in North Korea and Iran, America's estrangement from the rest of the world, and above all the unfinished war on terrorism. Anyone who thinks the Bush administration will take a softer line on these questions than it did on Iraq is probably kidding himself. Cheney will continue to push the agenda he set out 15 years ago: aggressive promotion of democracy through military power. This is no mere intoxication with ideas of the moment, spurred by a zealous staff or the pain of September 11. This is who Dick Cheney—the most powerful vice president in history—is. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Several Loves Actually

IT IS ALMOST UNFAIR. THE CAST OF **LOVE ACTUALLY** includes Emma Thompson, Liam Neeson, Hugh Grant, Alan Rickman, Laura Linney, and Colin Firth—all of them people of such accomplishment, all of them such reminders of past pleasures, that the sheer list of their names is almost overwhelming. No matter how aware we are that films with star-spangled casts have groaned under the load, we are held. These are not stars, or not merely stars: these are actors. Can such a film possibly be unrewarding?

LOVE ACTUALLY
(Universal)

MY ARCHITECT
(New Yorker)

It can't—largely because of them. The troubles with this English film are in the screenplay by Richard Curtis (who also directed), though a good deal of the writing is clever; but whatever the actors are given to do they make so delightful—or so delightfully moving—that *Love Actually* wins out over its wobbles. All through the (quite long) picture we get sticky bits, but then Thompson or Grant or Rickman or one of the others speaks a word with such delicacy or lights a smile from within so truthfully or reveals a complexity through such a small change of expression that we brave the bumps for the pleasures. After a while we drug ourselves with hyperbole. The film is in one sense lifelike: in order to get the good, we have to endure the lesser.

Love Actually is composed of a half-dozen or so stories, not often connected, simply interwoven. All of them have to do with love, one way or another, and all of them traverse the weeks before Christmas. The picture begins with a voice-over about the omnipresence of love in our lives (along with a stupid comment about September 11). This dollop of treacle is the first surprise from the screenwriter of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, both of which teased along wryly. More drips of syrup continue to spot *Love Actually*. But reality also persists, ranging from the ridiculous through the cynical to the sad, and in all these hues the actors are masterly.

Hugh Grant plays the British prime minister, resembling the current one enough to make the idea tickle. This PM is a bachelor. He is keen on a young woman on his staff. When the American president visits Downing Street and makes a play for that young woman, Grant sounds off in a press conference about British independence from American sway. (Independence! How's that for a comic idea?) Grant wins national cheers.

His sister, Emma Thompson, is a fortyish housewife and mother discovering that her successful husband, Alan Rickman, is on the verge of an affair. The tension-plus-bond between the knowledgeable wife and the differently knowledgeable husband is almost tangible. Colin Firth is a novelist who has a house in the south of France and engages a Portuguese maid, played by Lucia Moniz. The triteness of their story is freshened by Firth's grateful surprise at his response and by Moniz's dignified charm. In another story, one of the film's loveliest moments is simply Laura Linney's face as, on the dance floor, she moves for the first time into the arms of a man she has adored for two years. In his story Liam Neeson is worst served, playing a widowed stepfather who has to deal with his eleven-year-old stepson's first love—for a schoolmate. Neeson does everything possible with a role that consists largely of hugging the boy.

Curtis's range includes sly absurdities. One instance: a young fellow and a girl, strangers to each other, are hired to do sex stuff for a film totally nude, mimicking it without actually performing it. (They are body doubles for the principals who won't do these scenes.) In the middle of one of the most intimate scenes, the boy shyly asks the girl for a date.

On the other hand—there are several other hands—the film has some darkness. Linney's first rendezvous with her lover is interrupted by a call from her deranged brother. Curtis then extends the compass of love with a hospital scene crammed with Linney's feeling for her brother. And a quite different strand of the film is the holiday chronicle of a fifty-ish, spacey, sour pop star, etched by Bill Nighy, who wickedly airs his contempt for what he does as that contempt carries him to further success—and to an unsuspected love. That the Nighy strand and the saccharine strands are in the same picture is its success and its handicap.

The debits and the credits can be tallied a bit further. The mushy endings of Grant's story and of Neeson's are debits, but Curtis's neat directing is a credit. (Note the remote office assistant behind the window in Linney's hospital scene, a cold background to what is happening closer.) The credit side of the ledger also includes much of Curtis's dialogue and all the acting by that dream troupe.

In the time when I was going up to Yale to teach for two days in every week of the academic year, a secret perk of the job was Louis Kahn. Whenever I could, I wandered through the two buildings that Kahn had designed for Yale, the University Art Gallery and the Center for British Art, particularly the latter. The paintings were interesting or not; the walk through the buildings always transformed the day.

Now there is a documentary about Kahn called **MY ARCHITECT**. The filmmaker has precedence over my proprietary feelings about Kahn because he is Kahn's son, Nathaniel. The son has served the father well, though he faced an odd difficulty: the architect's life was so unusual that his son's understandable absorption with it steals a bit of time from his treatment of the work.

Louis Kahn was born in Estonia in 1901, was brought to America in 1905, became a world-renowned architect,

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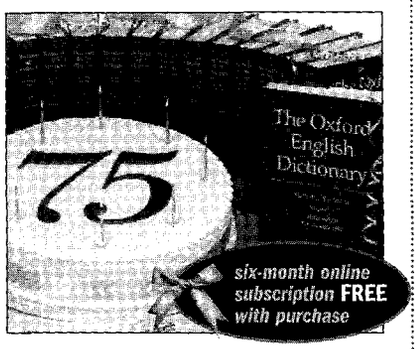

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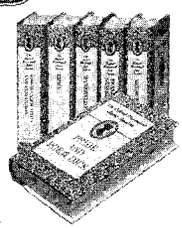

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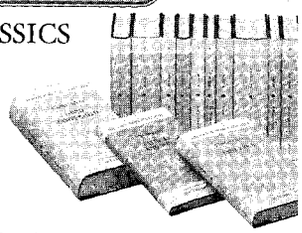

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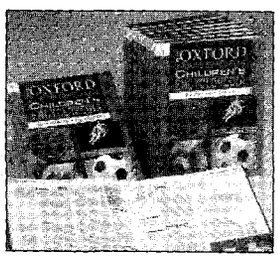

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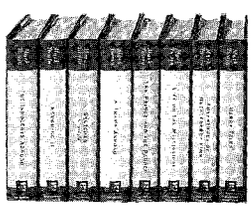

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fathered three children with three different women (one of whom he married), and died of a heart attack in the men's room of New York's Penn Station in 1974. Two further facts. Famous as he was, he died half a million dollars in debt, and his body lay unidentified in the city morgue for three days. This brusque summary obviously implies numerous adventures and misadventures of a focused, stubborn, high-handed, very engaging man.

The son, who was a boy when his father died, hadn't known him as well as he would have liked. This film is a gift to us but, one may guess, was made primarily for Nathaniel's satisfaction. He traces his father's life from the Philadelphia where he lived through the various places around the world where Kahn's work benefits the landscape, ending with the National Assembly complex in Bangladesh. Along the way there are conversations with Philip Johnson, I.M. Pei, Frank Gehry, Moshe Safdie, and others, all admirers who add facets to the Kahn character.

The only question about the film for this viewer is why most of the Kahn buildings are treated more or less like statuary. We usually are shown them from the outside, great embodiments of exalted visions. But I would have appreciated seeing more of the interiors, as I did on my walks through the buildings at Yale. ■

Dale Peck

Hatchet Jobs

A critic's life in a world of Stepford novels.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO *The Village Voice* asked me to review a novel, the second book by a writer with a convincingly authorial pedigree. The novel is somewhat hard to categorize: it's an epistolary romance of sorts, sort of, which is to say that there aren't really letters and there isn't really romance either, but a man and a woman do interact through written media, and this correspondence eventually produces a sort of emotional and sexual frisson. The man and the woman meet electronically; hence the ontological and epistemological uncertainty over genre, labels, names. Their creator seems to agree with the school of thinking that posits the Internet as an inherently unstable category of communication—a theory that I find a little fancy myself—and the case could be made that on a mimetic level this book captures the banality inherent to the anti-hierarchical parentheses-within-parentheses presentation of information via e-mail and chat rooms and bulletin boards. One could also argue, less charitably but more accurately, that in dutifully recording so many quotidian observations this novelist succeeds at little more than being quotidian.

But to dwell on this or any other subjective aspect of the book in question would be to miss the larger point: this novel's true act of mimesis isn't its imitation of e-speak, but its imitation of fiction. Its words describe "characters," its characters have detailed "histories," and these histories grow sedimentarily into "narrative"—but calling this narrative a "novel" is akin to calling a pan of flour and water, dutifully mixed together and baked, "bread." The ingredients are there, but the flavor and the style, the yeast and the salt of art, are not. The book lacks neither coherence nor intelligence. What it lacks is imagination, linguistic flair, a raison d'être more powerful than its author's presumably well-intentioned intention to write, and as a result the final product proves nothing more than the execution of its premise, as fully explicated in the single paragraph of jacket copy as it is in three hundred twenty prettily packaged pages.

This novel's destiny, I'm sure, is to take up space on the particleboard shelving units of the nation's chain bookstores, sandwiched in with the mass-produced simulacra that pass for literary fiction in America. Even allowing for the fact that any living literary community produces its fair share of James Fenimore Coopers and Pearl S. Bucks and Henry Millers and that it takes time to separate the chaff from the wheat; and even taking into consideration the theory that cinematic and virtual media have displaced the printed word as the dominant narrative forms, and that the novel and its grown-too-big-for-its-britches sibling, the memoir, are only occasionally profitable anachronisms; and even recognizing that literacy standards and technological advances have made it theoretically feasible for just about anyone to write and publish a book—even considering all these factors, the number of Stepford novels that are written, published, reviewed, and read every year is completely out of control. I'm not sure if this is because the standards for literary fiction have become so lax or because the conventions of the genre are so inbred, but it seems that anyone can write a novel these days. Not a mystery or a thriller or a romance or any other type of acknowledged formula fiction, but a *novel* (file under: Literature; see also: Classics).

DON'T GET ME WRONG. I'M NOT blaming this particular novelist for the phenomenon. Certainly I'd rather be writing novels than working in an office any day, and if she can pull it off then it's nobody's fault but the people who pay her. Blame, rather, Thomas More for writing *Utopia*. Blame Sartre for writing "The Wall," and Doris Lessing for writing *The Golden Notebook*, and Gore Vidal for writing all those historical diatribes, and Don DeLillo just for writing (and Jonathan Franzen, God help us, for reading him). Blame the people who publish these books; blame the people who buy them. Blame the writing programs and the prize committees; blame the deconstructionist literary critics or the back-patting Siamese-twinned professions of writing and reviewing fiction; blame any or all of the identity communities who read and write those ethnic- or gender-marketed booster books; blame the dead white European males who forced us to resort to literature as our daily affirmation in the first place. Blame whomever you want—but it seems to me that to summarize and to evaluate yet another of these shadow fictions is to miss the point. These novels are not bad. They just are not novels. They are not art. Real fiction does not "discover" truth, let alone present it to

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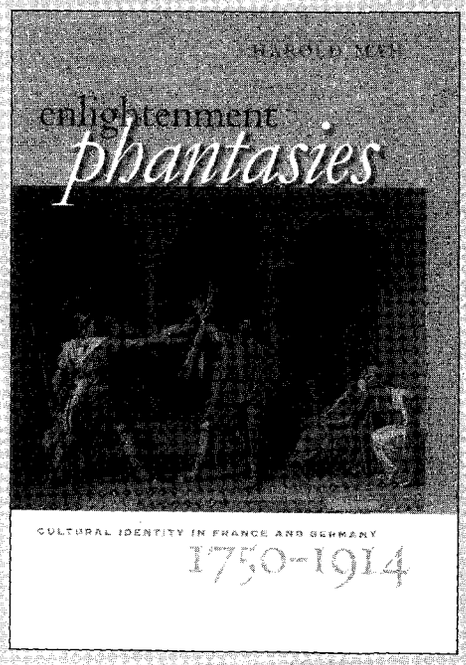
readers: real fiction invents and dispenses with truth as it sees fit. That's why it's called fiction.

There's more to American fiction than a plague of Stepford novels, obviously. Genuine writers are still writing genuine books, even if often those books are also bad. I am a fickle reader: charitable to hopeless cases and harsh toward writers with an authentic gift but, more than anything else, personally, emotionally involved in what I read. When I think that a book has let me down I get angry with it, and when I think that a book has deceived me I get livid. Thus my sharpest barbs and my most inhospitable ad hominems tend to be directed at writers whom I genuinely admire, or in whom I see genuine, wasted talent. This is because I think of myself as a kind of mother hen, not so much of writers, but of the novel itself. Fiction is like dance: it's susceptible to the egos of its practitioners. Bad writers can't do it much damage, because they will simply be ignored, but a self-indulgent writer with a single real skill can do incalculable harm.

IT IS TRUE THAT AS A CRITIC I don't say much about the strengths of the writers whom I review. Most of those writers had thousands of words devoted to their individual strengths long before I got around to cataloguing their weaknesses: they don't need me to point them out again. And God knows I have never aspired to anything like impartiality. If anything, I have always considered my flagrant bias to be one of the saving graces of my efforts. If I am extreme in my opinions, this stridency can always be attributed to its author rather than to some kind of universal authority. The very extremity of my views does as much to undermine my authority as to enforce it, or at least I hope it does, because I am by no means convinced of the hallowedness of my own ideas. And talent, again, is not the issue here: content is, and context. It seems to me that there are two strains of literature currently in vogue, recherché postmodernism and recidivist realism, and both of them, in my opinion, stink. I'm not interested in pointing out how a writer works well in one mode or another, or executes an aspect of one or another mode with a greater or lesser degree of success, because I think the modes themselves need to be thrown out entirely. Not as tools for writers sitting down to a blank page, but rather as the two poles they must choose between, and against which they are judged.

If I don't say much about the strengths of the writers whom I review, nor do I offer an alternative to the writing I spend so much time dissing. Sympathetic readers have often asked, if this is what writers shouldn't be doing, then what *should* they do? My feeling is that the last thing readers need is a writer telling them what to read (besides his or her own books, of course). And as for writers: well, if you need me to tell you how to write a novel, then you probably shouldn't be writing one in the first place. Still, there are some things I would like to say to my peers. But it's hard to tell someone whom you admire (or respect, or want to help, or in some way engage with) that you think there are problems with his or her work, let alone that it is, well, worthless. These reviews, if not as direct as a coffee klatch (or barroom brawl), are, I hope, some kind of dialogue with my generation. If, in the end, I offer nothing more than a series of prohibitions, it is because I think that it is precisely the need to sign on to a program that kills literature. As soon as a writer starts writing to belong to a tradition or a program or a school rather than to describe what's going on in the world, he or she has gone from being part of the solution to being part of the problem. Something that can be held up to a pre-determined list of attributes to be checked off one by one, so that a score of 80 percent makes it good, 90 percent makes it great, and 100 percent gets it a gold star, isn't art, it's high school. The year I graduated, the valedictorian was well known to be the best cheater in school: I helped him in English, my best friend let him look over his shoulder in math, and the science whiz (daughter of the science teacher, no less) helped him with biology and chemistry. As it happens, he was not a particularly stupid guy, and he was also reasonably nice, which was probably why we all helped him. But we were all shocked—not to mention a little angry—when he got to give the commencement speech instead of one of us. I have no interest in contributing to the making of another Cy Diller.

My hatred of contemporary literature has reached such a fever pitch that I am willing to be clownish in my depiction of it—to spew obscenities in ostensibly



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literary contexts or to chop books to bits with a hatchet in the pages of respectable journals. I am less and less capable of intellectual engagement with contemporary fiction because I feel like I've been had when I do so: the very process of literary analysis legitimizes a body of work that I feel is unworthy of such attention. My generation has inherited a tradition that has grown increasingly esoteric and exclusionary, falsely intellectual and alienating to the mass of readers, and just as falsely comforting to those in the club. In place of centuries of straightforward class discrimination, the twentieth century invented an elitist rhetoric intelligible to only the most diligent and educated of readers—a club that didn't exclude anyone per se, but made you work very, very hard to join. In the process we lost not just the eye but the respect of the reading public, a respect that every generation since the advent of modernism has strived for unsuccessfully, trying to entice readers back into the fold with delicately carved morsels of rotting flesh they try to pass off as prime rib.

I WILL SAY IT ONCE AND FOR ALL, straight out: it all went wrong with James Joyce. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is less a bildungsroman than the chapter-by-chapter unraveling of a talent that, if "The Dead" is any indication, could have been formidable, while *Ulysses* is nothing more than a hoax upon literature, a joint shenanigan of the writer and the critical establishment predicated on two admirable, even beautiful fallacies that were hopelessly contingent upon the historical circumstances that produced them: William James's late Victorian metaphor of the stream of consciousness, which seems at this point closer to phrenology than modern notions of psychology and neurology; and T. S. Eliot's early modern fantasy of a textual stockpile of intellectual history that would form an allusive network of bridges to the cultural triumphs of the ages, a Venice without the smell of sewage, or mustard gas.

Gertrude Stein did a beautiful duet with James's ideas in *Three Lives* and other books, and Eliot was his own best pupil, but Stein, for all her public boasting, was modest in her books, and Eliot was also his best critic, if not simply the best poet of the twentieth century. It took an imagination as literal as Joyce's, a temperament as dogged, an ambition as lacking in nuance, to turn a work as lively as the *Odyssey* into a stale monument to everything that had so recently failed the world. That *Ulysses* was so enthusiastically embraced represents less the return to the right path that so many wishful readers—including, at one point, Virginia Woolf—wished it would be, than a willful assumption of blinkers to the ways in which a blending of the storied and historical notions of progress had led the world so recently astray. For Joyce was not quite a modernist and then again not quite a lapsed Catholic. He lacked the doubt in language's ability to render the world that had made stream of consciousness so attractive to early twentieth-century writers in the first place, but thought instead that he was producing a mimetic account of how the mind worked; all you need do then is render a great mind—a mind as great as, say, Joyce's—and all your problems would go away. And of course Joyce has his strengths; but it is his failings that have been most successful, most pervasive in their effect. *Ulysses* has served since its publication as the ideal for serious writers, and the twentieth century is littered with magnum opuses that have been written under its sway, and that have marked the nadir of their various writers' careers.

If you are not a novelist, you cannot imagine what it feels like to write such heresy. Though I normally write in the morning, I am writing this in the middle of the night, like a fugitive; and my hands are shaking as I type. The excision from the canon, or at least the demotion in status, of most of Joyce, half of Faulkner and Nabokov, nearly all of Gaddis, Pynchon, and DeLillo, not to mention the general dumping of their contemporary heirs? The enormity of my presumptuousness cows even me. And then there's that other strain, which I can hardly bear to slog through, the realists and the realists and the *realists*, too many to name, too many to contemplate, their rational, utilitarian platitudes rolling out endlessly like toilet paper off a spindle. Who am I to say these brutal things? But a piecemeal approach won't do anymore. The problem is too widespread within the insular literary and publishing world merely to pick at its edges: the entire scab must be ripped off.

Learning to like experimental literature was, for most readers, a monumental task, and unlearning it is positively Sisyphean. It's not hard for me to find people who agree with me about certain writers: this person dislikes Moody, that person can't stand Wallace, another just doesn't get Whitehead. But dissing them all? And the people who produced them? Eyes glaze over; tongues get tangled. Yet almost anyone will admit that literature is an inherited form, that each new generation learns from its predecessors. If we can accept that we build on our predecessors' strengths, then why can't we accept that we might build on their mistakes as well? Wasn't that, after all, the premise of the Modernist revolution—that thirty centuries of Western culture had led not to a pinnacle of achievement but instead to the industrialized, assembly-line slaughter of soldiers and civilians in World War I? Certainly the postmodernists thought so when it happened again a quarter-century later, with the concentration camps thrown in as a coup de grâce.

Why is it so hard to think that a literary program forged under duress should have at its heart a fatal flaw? That, looking back, the first and second world wars seem less and less like aberrations and more and more like periodic irruptions that are as much a part of our way of life as inflation and unemployment are a part of capitalist cycles? And that now might be a good time to try to decide on a different strategy, when the entire world, as distorted as it might be, is not distorted the way it was then? Because—make no mistake—every writer wants to save the world. Or, more accurately: art, like political activism, seeks to make itself unnecessary. Embedded in every story, every poem, every play is a utopian vision that, if achieved, would make the words irrelevant, redundant, unnecessary. But parody and pastiche have run their course in that effort. Their mockery does little more than affirm the power of the thing mocked and the powerlessness of the thing doing the mocking. It is time for a literature that opts out of such a limited, dysphonic call-and-response paradigm, and instead offers a real alternative, an imaginative solution that hints at something beyond the juvenile culture that today's writers spend so much time making fun of in such a juvenile manner. Isn't that a more worthwhile goal for a generation of writers to work toward, rather than their own fame?

And so my affinity for the hatchet job. My goal as a critic has never been to offer an alternative model to the kinds of writing I discuss here, because it is precisely when a line is drawn in the sand that people begin to toe it and you fall into the trap of reification, of contemporane-

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ity, of an inability to react to changing circumstances. Rather than make my own claims as to what fiction should be—claims that I make all the time, and that primarily have to do with my own work, or the work of an individual writer—I wanted only to hack away the dead wood in order to discover the heart of the novel. That heart is, I believe, still beating, is still strong and vital; it needs a critic's help not to grow, but only to be seen. Of course the heart in question isn't a heart at all, but rather a diffuse locus of ideas and ideologies loosely tethered to a set of individual visions and personalities. None is complete in itself: there is no Borgesian Aleph hidden from view or new *Ulysses* waiting to be written, no unified third party or fifth column to fall between the late postmodernists and recidivist realists, but rather a true republic of literature composed of single votes in the form of single writers, even single books. And a book should be discovered on its own terms, or on the reader's terms, but never on the critic's terms. I am leery of telling people what to look for, lest that's precisely what they find.

Novelists, myself included, lie for a living. Before there is fiction's much-vaunted truth, there is the lie—the invention, the fabrication, the prevarication, the *fiction*. That lie is the engine of history, of love and capital and science. The poet's dream is a carrot we all chase at one time or another—and history is a story, at least the way we tell it. Setup, rising action, climax, dénouement. The basic elements are borrowed from fiction in a chronological syntax as rigid as grammar itself. But chronology is just a mental conceit imitating time, and linearity is a narrative conceit imitating chronology. It is *all* metaphor, and metaphor is language's mercenary: it will work for anyone. That novelists have dragged metaphor into service as their primary foot soldier reflects my own experience of literature, which is that it is first and foremost an attack on life, sometimes overtly, but more often hiding the truth from itself. Literature is an act of revenge that aspires to elegy. It mourns what it isn't—what it thinks it has killed by comparison.

Semiotically, syntactically, at the level of the sign and the level of the sentence, from which all narrative proceeds, language waters the seeds of its own failure. Not just its inability to be what it names, but the immense difficulty of measuring the gap between. Of distance? Of closeness? It depends whether you see the cup as half full or half empty. But only after a work of literature has accepted its own failure—has, as it were, elegized its stillborn self—can it begin the complex series of contextual manipulations by which meaning is created and we locate ourselves as surely as the ancient navigators fixed their positions between stars. In recent years we have been far, far too busy celebrating our Pyrrhic victories to examine our much greater failures. Contemporary novels have either counterfeited reality or forfeited it. In their stead we need a new materialism. ■

Simon Blackburn
The Ethics of Belief

A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love
By Richard Dawkins
(Houghton Mifflin, 263 pp., $24)

I.

Richard Dawkins is the Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford, and one of the best-known scientists and writers of our time. His works explaining biology and evolution, including *The Selfish Gene*, *The Extended Phenotype*, and *The Blind Watchmaker*, are deservedly classics. The title of his chair at Oxford fits him perfectly, since he must have done more to increase the public understanding of his own science, and indeed of science in general, than anyone else of his generation. The only writer on similar themes who came close to him was Stephen Jay Gould, to whom several of the papers in this sparkling collection are addressed. But Dawkins is a more reliable evolutionary theorist, I think, than Gould was.

This collection contains many of Dawkins's thoughts about the significance of science, as well as some eulogies, prefaces, and topical contributions such as a piece on the Sokal hoax. Some, particularly the eulogies for two of his heroes, the science-fiction writer Douglas Adams and the great biologist W. D. Hamilton, and also the correspondence with his supposed opponent Stephen Jay Gould, show a remarkably warm and generous side to Dawkins. So does his wonderful encomium to an inspirational teacher, the headmaster Sanderson of the famous school Oundle, a maverick who could no longer exist in a culture dominated by bureaucratic controls and demands.

Other essays show more steel. They concern the interpretation of science, and the relationship between science and culture. They say less about biological science itself, although one essay in particular, "Darwin Triumphant," is a marvelous statement of the methodology and the status of current evolutionary theory. Indeed, it is the best such introduction I know, and it ought to be the first port of call for know-nothings and saloon-bar skeptics about the nature and the power of Darwinian theory. In it Dawkins shows his uncanny ability to combine what might seem light and introductory material with heavyweight contributions to theory. He moves seamlessly from introducing "core Darwinism" to answering a professional question left open by Francis Crick. The clarity of his writing is astonishing. This is his description of core Darwinism: "the minimal theory that evolution is guided in adaptively nonrandom directions by the nonrandom survival of small random hereditary changes." Every word counts; none could be omitted, and for the purposes of definition no more are needed. It is immediately obvious that core Darwinism is compatible with random genetic drift (where no adaptive advantage accrues because of a change) or with external catastrophic interference, as in the destruction of the dinosaurs, yet much ink has been spilled on misunderstandings of these things. Consider also a part of his answer to the question that Crick raised, asking why Lamarckian inheritance, the inheritance of acquired characteristics, could not be as efficient as

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natural selection: "If acquired characteristics were indiscriminately inherited, organisms would be walking museums of ancestral decrepitude, pock-marked from ancestral plagues, limping relics of ancestral misfortune." Almost any page will show similar gems.

The "Devil's Chaplain" of Dawkins's title comes from Darwin: "What a book a Devil's Chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature." Dawkins does not flinch from the depressing picture of the evolutionary process that so horrified many Victorians. Nature is clumsy and wasteful and blunderingly low and horridly cruel, or at least horridly indifferent. Creatures live on others in sickening ways, and nature erupts in terrible arms races in which predator and prey provoke each other to more complex and more fiendish devices. But the accumulation of tiny accidents and the winnowing process of the evolutionary sieve can result in marvels, whether it is a swallow's flight or the running of a gazelle or the ingenuity of a scientist. For one of the marvels is the human brain, with its capacity for taking control, for planning, for cooperating with others, or for manipulating the environment. The question of how it should do these things takes us to ethics. The question of how it got to be so that it can do these things takes us to evolutionary science.

DAWKINS UNASHAMEDLY AND gloriously delights in science. If anything is sacred to him, it is truth and the patient road to it. He loves the methods of science and its self-correcting nature. He loves the amazing world that it reveals—a world far more amazing than any that human beings could invent out of their own heads. A quotation that he provides from Douglas Adams fits him exactly: "I'd take the awe of understanding over the awe of ignorance any day." In the last essay in the book he expresses this love in a moving letter to his ten-year-old daughter, extolling science's reliance on observation, evidence, and the testing of hypotheses, and contrasting them with the ways by which falsehoods come to grip the human mind: by authority, and tradition, and the inner conviction called revelation.

Still, Dawkins can seem surprisingly unperturbed by the forces that unsettle public confidence in science. Writing to Tony Blair about the furor over genetically modified crops, he contrasts the "gut reactions" of the green movement, which he despises, with a "rational plea for rigorously safe testing," which he endorses. But he thereby bypasses the Greens' fear that in a world where universities are beholden to big agriculture, there is no such thing as rigorously safe testing, or at least no way for the rest of us to know if it ever takes place. Dawkins does not write as if distorted observations, bent peer review, the demand for results from industrial sponsors, and the corruption of the medical profession by pharmaceutical companies are much of a problem. He reminds his daughter that even if we take scientific facts on trust, we can in principle go and look for ourselves, repeating whatever experiments are necessary. But he is, perhaps, a little too quiet about the practical impossibility of doing any such thing.

The betrayal of science that does arouse him to fury comes from religion. Dawkins is an atheist, a strenuous and militant and proud one. He thinks religious belief is a dangerous virus, and that it is a crime to infect the mind of a child with it. He believes that "only the willfully blind could fail to implicate the divisive force of religion in most, if not all, of the violent enmities in the world today." He calls religions "dangerous collective delusions," and he thinks that they are sinks of falsehood (most of them have to be, since only one can be true). He especially regrets their public influence. He is made apoplectic by the pontifications of religious "leaders" on such questions as whether human clones would be fully human, made in blissful ignorance of the fact that identical twins are clones of each other.

Religion in England is not terribly demanding. It is not typically to be thought of in terms of, say, the Kansas School Board or the teaching of "creationist science," things about which any educated person should be deeply disturbed. Nor in its native form is English religion a matter of clerics telling you what you can eat or whom you can marry. It is not even a matter of oily frauds on television fleecing the poor and the stupid of their savings. It is seen largely as a set of marginal but aesthetically pleasing rituals: the King's College carol service, a stroll around Salisbury or York, watercress sandwiches and a bit of Elgar. And so it is not really done to dump on English religion too heavily; better to raise your hat to a vicar than raise your fists to him. This puts Dawkins in the somewhat paradoxical position of being an evangelical atheist in a country where evangelicals of any kind are largely mistrusted. At least until recently, his crusading seemed to many people in England a little bit over the top, a touch embarrassing. *Surtout, pas de zèle*: Talleyrand's excellent motto, goes down well in England, yet Dawkins is zealous.

But he has a good excuse. The religious virus is a cunning enemy, and recent years have actually seen creationist schools creeping into the United Kingdom, while our prime minister, who together with his wife is the beneficiary of a marvelous gene that enables him to believe absolutely whatever he would like to believe, has set up an influential committee for increasing religiosity in the workings of government. (Although nominally a Catholic, Cherie Blair goes in more for New Age nonsense, but as far as I am aware the government has not yet been instructed to consult crystal balls.) Dawkins thinks, and I agree with him, that we cannot afford to be complacent. Even if we have little religious zealotry at home, we do not have to go as far as America or the Middle East to find it. We only need to look across the sea to Northern Ireland to be reminded of what happens once the religious virus takes hold. And Dawkins has a further reason for his zeal: evolution and biology have been and still are frequent targets of those infected by religion. They are areas where what we are—large primates—conflicts most sharply with what such people would like to think of us as being: children of God, little lower than angels, specially anointed. When wishful thinking collides with science, it is generally wishful thinking that wins, and Dawkins is right to be driven wild by it.

II.

YET I WONDER WHETHER RELIgion and science relate to each other in quite the way that Dawkins envisages. He thinks of religious belief as simply true or false, like other beliefs, and then overwhelmingly likely to be false, since they are either inconsistent with or unsupported by our best evidence about the way the world works. Religion is superstition, like astrology, alternative medicine, and the rest. He likes an example of Bertrand Russell's in which we consider the hypothesis that there is a china teapot in its own orbit around the sun. Someone might believe it, but there are many reasons for supposing it false and none at all

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for supposing it true. Dawkins is right that it would be simply silly to set store by the fact that the belief cannot be disproved. It may depend on your standards of proof, but in any event the hypothesis is as unlikely as can be, and as unlikely as any of the infinite number of equally outlandish possible beliefs that we all ignore all the time.

It might seem not to matter if someone convinces himself that there is such a teapot. But Dawkins might side, as I would, with the Victorian mathematician W. K. Clifford, whose famous essay "The Ethics of Belief" excoriated our "right" to believe pretty much what we like:

> In like manner, if I let myself believe anything on insufficient evidence, there may be no great harm done by the mere belief; it may be true after all, or I may never have occasion to exhibit it in outward acts. But I cannot help doing this great wrong towards Man, that I make myself credulous. The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery.

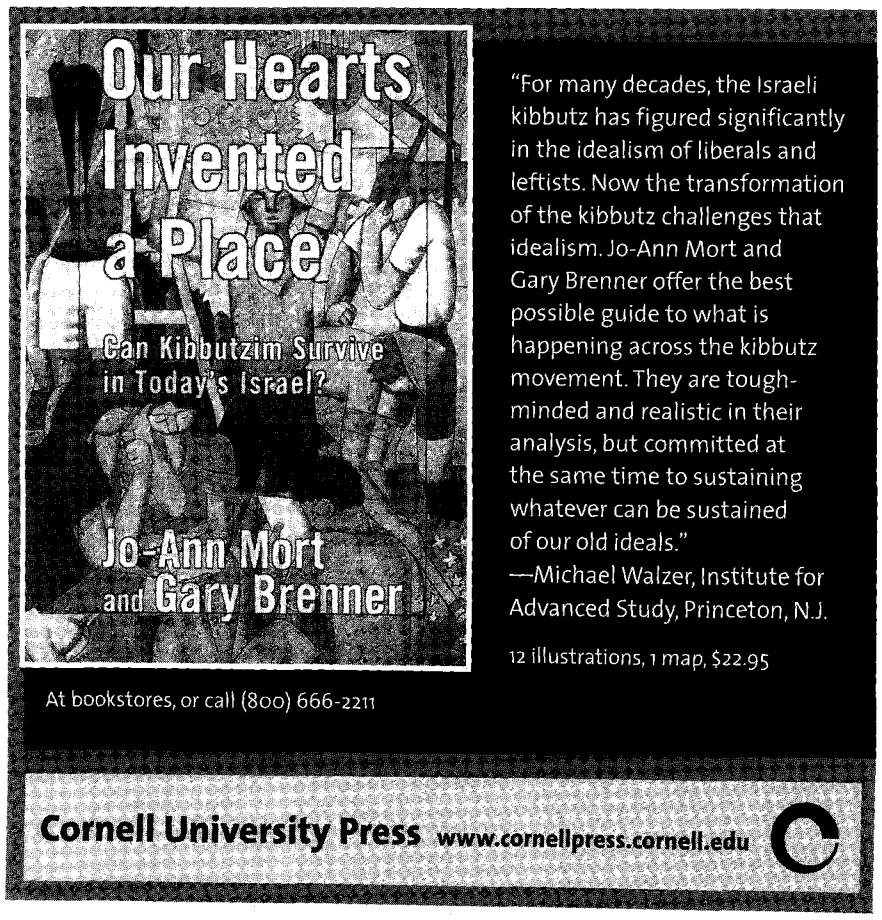
But the real and present danger lies not so much here but in what the belief in the teapot waits to do. To become anything worth calling a religious belief, a belief needs to connect with our form of life, our way of being in the world. Perhaps out of its spout come instructions on how to behave, whom to shun and whom to persecute, how to eat and what to wear. Now the teapot becomes an object of veneration, and of controversy. It needs interpreting. It needs a dedicated class of people (usually men) to give authoritative renderings of its texts and their meanings. In short, it has become a religious icon, and dangerous.

It has also stopped being a teapot, or merely a teapot (just as Duchamp's urinal stops being merely a urinal: it is the audience's interpretation of it that matters). It will have started to be a sin not to believe in this teapot, although normally it is no sin to doubt the existence of anything. The teapot may have become eternal, although natural teapots are not. In fact, at this point we can forget the teapot qua teapot, and look straight at the institutions that it supports and the instructions and the way of life into which it gets woven. The factual component is not the bit that does the work. The teapot is merely a prop in the game, and an imaginary teapot serves just as well.

The same is true of the great or wise Architect of the eighteenth century, or the Intelligent Designer who is so important to the good people in Kansas. If you use evidence from the wonderful contrivances of nature to ascend to a designer, what then? There is no immediate practical difference between living in a world with such-and-such natural stuff in it and living in a world with the same natural stuff in it that some supernatural being created, or even occasionally tweaks in unpredictable ways. The more extravagant account offers no new scientific predictions, and certainly no inferences as to how to behave, whom to admire, or what to fight for or against. You have to import all that yourself, from your culture or your morality. If you marvel long enough at the adaptation of bees and orchids to start thinking of intelligent design, that is just a barren scientific mistake; but if, as a next step, you begin to think that the designer has given you satisfactory authority to persecute people with bare heads or red beards, you have become religious, but you are no longer in the world of fact at all.

On this way of thinking, religious activity becomes more like dance, song, drama, or ritual. Its essence lies in what religious people do, not what they believe or say that they believe. And the question of whether it is good to go in for these dances and dramas stops being a scientific question. It becomes a political or an ethical or an aesthetic question.

For Dawkins, a sentence such as "I know that my redeemer liveth" expresses a superstitious and false belief that someone who lived two thousand years ago goes on living still, contrary to all the known processes of biology. On the Wittgensteinian view that I have just outlined, it is more like an expression of awe or fear or self-righteousness or humility. It is the saying of someone who is trying to articulate certain emotions, and who has been given this particular repertoire of expressions of them, just as he might have been given a waltz or a minuet. It is not a saying that is contradicted by the scientific truth that people do not live that long.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It is a good question whether the Wittgensteinian account chimes very well with the self-understanding of believers, and whether it matters if it does not chime with it at all. It has consequences for one problem that troubles Dawkins, which is the extent to which even atheists seem drawn to "respect" the attitudes and the beliefs of religious people. Why should anyone "respect" the belief that there is a china teapot orbiting the sun? It is just dotty, and that is the end of it. But if we see a religious tradition as a record of a culture's ongoing attempts to cope with fear and hope, life and death, gain and loss, then it certainly becomes a candidate for respect, just as much as the artistic and literary traditions of our ancestors. I recall reading somewhere that the doughty Enlightenment spirit Edward Gibbon recounted journeying past the cathedral of Chartres with words like these: "Pausing only to dart a look of contempt at the stately pile of superstition, we passed on." It is important that atheists do not have to share this attitude of Gibbon's, and I am sure that Dawkins does not share it. It is religious people, after all, who deface and destroy religious buildings.

Becoming a possible object of respect, a religious tradition also becomes a target for criticism, and Dawkins is quite capable of mounting the true criticism of most current religiosities, including that of all the monotheistic religions of the desert, which is that they are frequently cruel, misogynistic, divisive, intolerant, and life-denying, and that they warp for the worse the emotions and the practices of countless people across the globe. The function of these religions is to regulate how people behave and think, and unfortunately people regulate how they behave in the most awful ways and think the most awful things. There is no skyhook, so our teapots are no better than we are, and often bring out the worst in us.

III.

In the popular mind, Richard Dawkins is probably associated with two influential ideas: the selfish gene and the meme. The first is associated with a particular way of thinking of natural selection, a "gene's-eye view" that, as Dawkins has always acknowledged, was heralded by W. D. Hamilton and G. C. Williams in the 1960s, or even earlier. To an outsider it now appears quite orthodox within that field, although one needs to be very surefooted to follow the mathematics and the logic behind controversies over whether evolution "operates at" the level of genes, individuals, species, or other units. Indeed, it is not always clear whether there is real rivalry here.

Thus at some points in his writings Dawkins himself has suggested that we just have different ways of looking at the same thing. In *The Extended Phenotype*, he uses the analogy of a Necker cube, which "flips" from being seen one way to being seen another, suggesting that the gene's-eye view and the individual's perspective are then just two different ways of looking at the same truth. In his usual, more evangelical mood he wants to insist that the gene's-eye view is better. In the introduction to the second edition of *The Selfish Gene*, while still admitting that the different standpoints cannot be judged by experiment, verification, and falsification, nevertheless the change of vision can "usher in a whole climate of thinking, in which many exciting and testable theories are born, and unimagined facts laid bare." New ways of seeing make their own contributions to science.

They do indeed, and spectators such as myself will have to take it on trust that this has happened here. But it is not completely obvious how. For comparison, imagine a new method of treating an injury at football, such as a sprained ankle. Suppose it is quicker and less painful than the old method, which it then supplants. It makes little sense on the face of it to argue about which is the prime beneficiary, what Dawkins calls the "optimon" or the "entity for whose benefit adaptations may be said to exist." Is it the ankle, the player, the team, the supporters, or even the doctor? More outlandishly, is it perhaps the treatment itself, a cultural device or "meme" in Dawkins's sense, which will replicate itself effectively just because it is better adapted to the football environment than the old treatment? I do not think that these are very well-formed questions, or that we do well to choose one answer over another. All that does seem clear is that there is an arrow of causation. The change in treatment benefits the spectators because it benefits the team, which it does only because it benefits the player, and it benefits the player only because it benefits his ankle. You cannot say it the other way around: it is not true that the treatment benefits the ankle because it benefits the team.

Similarly, an adaptive mutation in a gene may benefit a group because it benefits individuals, and may spread because it does so. In saying these things, at least we use "benefit" in a literal sense. If, in the football example, we go on to say that the prime beneficiary is the meme, the treatment itself, I doubt if we mean anything—except, of course, that because of its superior merits this treatment is set to become more common than other treatments. Similarly, if we say that the prime beneficiary of a mutation is the gene itself, I doubt we can mean more than that because of its superior merits in aiding the life of its host this gene is set to become more common than its allele, or less adaptive rival.

Perhaps this is all that we should mean. By now it is not seriously doubted

The Foxes

The manner in which Jimmy says *fox*—
flattening his lips, deliberately furrowing

his brow—makes the animal more menacing
and exotic as if it were a creature

I had never encountered. But they nested
near the old house the summer it burned.

They cried so mornings. My father
had already left then, and though the fox

cry was not so symbolic of his leaving,
I made it so. Listen how they know

of grief. I am a man now, too. I walk
to the edge of the forest and touch

my hand to a young pine. I do not know
what it is I want: to listen to a not-distant piercing,

to tell the others a story, to be
blameless. All around creatures live

and die in tandem. We knew that,
and we came here anyway.

JOHN FRAZIER

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that the random variations described in core Darwinism occur at the level of the gene. That much is not in question. Is everything else, such as the apparent personification of the gene, merely rhetorical? It is hard to be sure. Dawkins is such a vivid and powerful writer, with such a range of metaphor at his disposal, that it is not always his readers' fault if they take him to mean more. The notorious descriptions of persons as blind or lumbering robots, of human life prostituted to the selfish gene (a phrase that he takes from the late Christopher Evans), of human beings as "alone on earth" rebelling against the tyranny of the selfish replicators, is deliberately thrilling. But then comes the sobering up. "Lumbering robot" does not quite mean what it sounds to mean. It covers anything capable of learning, intelligence, creativity, and emotion. Us, in fact. "Selfish" does not mean selfish, which implies a capacity to think in terms of self, but simply means capable of replicating itself more numerously than others. I should not be surprised if somewhere Dawkins patiently explains that "prostitute" and "tyranny" have technical meanings in biology, so that the idea of ourselves as prostituted to our genes or heroically rebelling against their tyranny has simply been misunderstood by laypersons.

There is, of course, no reason at all why biology, like any other science, should not give terms a technical use. But it is important to insist that our words control us at least as much as we control them, and I am not convinced that in places such as these Dawkins is in perfect control. Consider the idea that we alone on earth can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators within us. What is the stripped-down, sober biological truth intended by such language? Like all other living things, we have genes. We also have psychologies; that is, in accordance with our genetic recipes and chemical environments, large brains have formed, so that we think and desire and form intentions and plans after we have grown into the culture around us. But what is all this about rebelling and tyranny? A tyrant may tell me to do something, and, rebelling, I do something else. What is the analogy? Perhaps an occasion when I am really tempted to do something, but control myself and do something else instead. But why describe this as a case of defying my genes? You might as well say that I am rebelling against my brain, whereas the fact is that I am using it. It is only Cartesian dualists—that is, dare one say it, religious people—who go in for opposing what nature would have me do against what I, the real me, does. And it is not even true that we alone on earth can exercise self-control. A dog may resist the temptation to take a biscuit, having been told not to do so.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL ITEMS such as tunes or games, beliefs or fashions, as themselves "memes" with a kind of life of their own, making use of human beings as vehicles in their pitiless Darwinian struggle with competitors, has similar problems. First it sounds perverse, but then it seems dazzling and exciting. Yes! A gunman is a bullet's way of making another bullet, and a librarian is a library's way of making another library! Like Samuel Butler, who instructed that "even a potato in a dark cellar has a low cunning that stands it in excellent stead," we suddenly think of tunes and games and accents and treatments as pursuing their own projects, plotting to invade us, making use of us to pursue their own competitive existences. Again, though, there is the sobering up. Get rid of any image of a tune or a treatment cunningly squirreling away, invading people and bringing about changes. A tune does not literally make use of people, since it is not the kind of thing that has purposes and designs. What is true is that when one lodges in people's heads, they are prone to spread it. And then we feel let down, since this is all that is apparently left when the rhetorical flourishes are cleaned off.

The upshot, then, is that for his ideas to work, there need to be three levels at which to read Dawkins on such matters. There is strict science—empirical, verifiable, and falsifiable. There is the value of the gene's-eye view or the meme's-eye view, giving us some surplus meaning: a guiding metaphor or way of thinking of things, earning its keep through prompting stricter science. And there is the merely rhetorical level, where the surplus meaning might mislead the layperson, but which is in Dawkins's view easily detachable and disavowed. I have been voicing some doubts about this last claim, but the more important question for science is what is left, or whether everything goes when the bad surplus meaning goes. I am tempted to suppose that this is how it is with memes. At the very least, it would be nice to see which real, fruitful, empirically testable hypotheses about the processes of cultural transmission have been offspring of the idea.

It would be churlish to end on a note of doubt, since memes and genes take up only a small part of this book. Richard Dawkins is too valuable an ally in the battle to keep our culture educated and reasonable to allow these refined issues to matter too much. He is a superb writer, and a great advocate for sanity, and an endlessly informative resource. He should be compulsory reading for school boards everywhere. ■

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Wyatt Mason
Gravity

THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK: A CITY IN THIRTEEN PARTS
By Colson Whitehead
(Doubleday, 158 pp., $19.95)

IS THERE A STYLE IN WHICH THE truth cannot be told? Two sentences that appeared in a brief article by the celebrated young novelist Colson Whitehead prompt the question. Titled "The Image," the piece appeared in the September 23, 2001 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. Whitehead described the morning of September 11 in Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn. In the company of his wife and surrounded by strangers, he was staring at the burning World Trade Center towers. Whitehead reports that he suggested his wife take a photograph:

> Because it was a very nice shot, well composed. The three men in the foreground were obviously strangers, standing together, but not so close as to violate any rules about personal space. They were of different races; one had a dog that looked away from the scene at a bird or something, one had abandoned a bicycle on the ground. The bicycle was a nice touch—couldn't have placed it better myself. In the sky before the men, the towers burned. The right part of the frame was unblemished blue sky, the left a great wash of brown and black smoke. The dynamic event, the small human figures. It was a nice shot. Call it "The Watchers" or "The Spectators."

Whitehead's account of his impulse to seize the image of the horror is not without self-mockery ("The bicycle was a nice touch—couldn't have placed it better myself"). For by the time he has come to set these lines down, he has become killingly aware that the very last thing he and his wife had before them was a "nice shot." How could he have thought it had been a nice shot at all? "[I]t had been easier to shape the horror into an aesthetic experience and deny the human reality. There was safety in that distance." Whitehead realized that however readily those idyllic foreground "touches" leaped into the frame, they ultimately distracted from the background horror that was unfolding. The pastoral image that Whitehead thought to freeze—all blue skies and bicycles, racial harmony and distracted dogs—was grotesquely misleading: it masked the truth that the image should have been unveiling.

Whitehead is careful and clear in his acknowledgment of this failure, this risk of aesthetic distance. But it is precisely this clarity and comprehension that make all the more unsettling the two lines that Whitehead pens to describe the very collapse that he holds responsible for his realization: "And then Tower 2 sighed. The top floors buckled out, spraying tiny white shards, and the building sank down into itself, crouching beneath the trees and out of frame." A sigh, that gentlest and most trivial of exhalations, reserved for moments when we are placidly tired or mildly disappointed, turns the collapse of one hundred thousand tons of steel and glass—which made a cloud visible from space and a sound audible forty miles away—into a mild human wind.

As a "nice touch," however idyllic, Whitehead's use of the word "sighed" is as clear an instance as I have encountered of a stylistic choice, an aesthetic shaping, that distracts us from the thing described and attracts us instead to the description. Not, of course, that "crouching" is any better. It is a hopelessly weak word, for no one ever died of a crouch; but Whitehead here has folded the death of thousands by the most ghastly means—dismemberment, immolation, suffocation, impact—into a metaphorical bending of knees. One might argue, given that readers already understood the weight of the event that Whitehead was describing, that his responsibility was not reportorial. Perhaps Whitehead was merely trying to alleviate our distress by transforming a thing of great ugliness into a thing of some beauty. Yet this verbal image is no less graphically misleading than the photographic image that Whitehead upbraided himself for considering. Death has been aesthetized entirely out of view, horror hidden in the background by a foreground of writerly effects. Whitehead's two sentences provide not an image of what was happening—people dying—but a picture of a man writing. A moment of the greatest weight—physical, emotional, spiritual—is rendered in language that denies every kind of gravity. With objectivity, call this writing false.

SUCH FALSENESS IS DISAPPOINTing in a writer of talent. Whitehead's two novels, *The Intuitionist* (1998) and *John Henry Days* (2001), exhibit a metaphorical reach and a structural sophistication that distinguish him among less ambitious peers. Under the umbrella of large organizing metaphors—elevators in *The Intuitionist*, the mythical steel-driving man in *John Henry Days*—he has explored the dynamics of race and modern life. The language of his novels is frequently memorable and distinctive, and the depth of his reading is apparent in that prose. It brims with echoes of techniques and tones drawn from predecessors both American and continental, whether elders (Joyce, Woolf, Gaddis) or nearer contemporaries (Barthelme, Pynchon, DeLillo, Foster Wallace, Moody). He has been praised for "his willingness to take the intellectual risks necessary to expand the boundaries of contemporary writing."

And so, within that program of risk-taking, comes Whitehead's new book about New York. Engendered by the terrorist attacks on the city, the book is his first work of non-fiction, a baker's dozen of short pieces devoted to different views of the city. When Whitehead writes, "What follows is my city. Making this a guide book, with handy color-coded maps and minuscule fine print you should read very closely so you won't be surprised," he is of course being ironic: the book, as you might guess, has no such maps or print. His ambition is neither to offer details that you could find in a guidebook nor to provide sociological or historical perspective. His thirteen sections—with titles ranging from "Broadway" to "Brooklyn Bridge," from "Rush Hour" to "Rain"—are meant to be evocative, not

Wyatt Mason's latest translation, I PROMISE TO BE GOOD: THE LETTERS OF ARTHUR RIMBAUD, *was recently published by Modern Library. He is a fellow at the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library.*

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argumentative. Formally, the pieces are not essays at all. They are prose poems, at times reminiscent in style of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. Whitehead frequently abandons conventions of English grammar, focusing instead on the creation of mood and the insinuation of tone. His method is impressionistic, imagistic, for Whitehead is not presenting the city as it stands, but as it sits within him.

The Colossus of New York must therefore be read as a devotional text, written by a congregant from his pew. The first section, "City Limits," begins: "I'm here because I was born here and thus ruined for anywhere else, but I don't know about you." If, at first blush, this might seem like the typical arrogance of a New Yorker and therefore be dismissed out of hand for its parochialism, upon reflection it is less an attitude unique to New York than the ubiquitous chauvinism of natives everywhere. As Gertrude Stein noted, in her version of the urban ode, *Paris, France*:

> Familiarity does not breed contempt. On the contrary the more familiar it is the more rare and beautiful it is. Take the quarter in which one lives, it is lovely, it is a place rare and beautiful and to leave it is awful. I remember once hearing a conversation on the street in Paris . . . they had to leave the quarter . . . they had to leave the most wonderful place in the world, wonderful because it was there where they had always lived.

Whitehead finds New York similarly familiar, and therefore similarly wonderful. And so it is easy to become infected by Whitehead's sense of wonder, by his love for the city, when he writes:

> I never got a chance to say good-bye to some of my old buildings. Some I lived in, others were part of a skyline I thought would always be there. And they never got a chance to say good-bye to me. I think they would have liked to—I refuse to believe in their indifference. . . . Our old buildings still stand because we saw them, moved in and out of their long shadows, were lucky enough to know them for a time. They are a part of the city we carry around.

In this way the loss of the twin towers has been gently absorbed into the city's history of losses. A facet of being a New Yorker, Whitehead offers, is to be aware of those sudden voids, to be as aware of them as of the actual presences before us. That observation is something of a commonplace. It is called memory. It happens everywhere: "The Meyersons' barn used to be over there and the old oak tree with the rope swing was by the creek until it got hit by lighting." The difference in New York, if one must insist upon a difference, might be the speed with which such changes take place, the destabilizing nature of urban change.

Whitehead richly and simply evokes the melancholy of such a condition:

> We can never make the proper good-byes. It was your last ride in a Checker cab and you had no warning. . . . There are unheralded tipping points, a certain number of times that we will unlock the front door of an apartment. At some point you were closer to the last time than you were to the first time, and you didn't even know it. You didn't know that each time you passed the threshold you were saying good-bye.

He is at his most moving at the moments of restraint and directness visible in these final sentences. The elegiac tone that insinuates a sorrow into our least daily movements, that implicates us all in this process of forgetting, is convincing. Whitehead's shifts from the first-person plural "we" to the second-person singular "you" inject a soft solidarity into the prose that drops our defenses.

I wish, though, that Whitehead were similarly attentive to his affection for Checker cabs. They are a telling detail, richly evocative of New York in the 1970s, but surely the reference is lost on anyone who did not live in the city before the decommissioning of these monsters in the early 1980s. It would be more generous and useful were Whitehead to pinpoint something specific about a Checker cab that one would miss. New Yorkers of Whitehead's generation recall the joy of stepping into the enormous, limousine-like passenger compartment. Children in particular were fond of the fold-down, backward-facing seats, some of which swiveled magically into place. To present these cabs so blankly, omitting the particulars that make them memorable, is a small missed opportunity.

But it is a revealing one. Early in his book Whitehead lays out his ground rules: his concern is not with particulars. "Never listen to what people tell you about old New York," he writes, "because if you didn't witness it, it is not a part of your New York." Whitehead is not telling us about "New York." He is telling us about how New York has made him feel. Tone and image are his preoccupation, not historical detail. The technique that he puts in service of that impressionism is rapid-fire imagery. Often he cuts like a documentary film from one shot to the next, as in this picture of Central Park:

> It's a little-known fact that people are buried here but only the murderers know the exact locations. Invisible wet stuff on the ground and here's a dead squirrel. So much for the picnic. Cross-legged summits. Welcome to the Riviera. Mistakes have been made in the area of shorts. This guy's nuts hang out as he sits Indian-style and she should really consider waxing if she's going to leave the house like that. Bushes, hedges, dark thickets. Don't go too far, kids, there are areas used for anonymous sex. Let's have anonymous sex, what do you say. Don't touch it, you'll get rabies. Prod it with a stick instead.

An ear hears words of parental caution; an eye picks up nuts; a mind processes a view of sunbathers on towels into a wry Riviera. Whitehead sets a woman who has "left the house like that" next to "bushes" so that the word applies equally to the woman's inner thighs and the landscape. It is a risky but, in this instance, successful stylistic compression. It creates a vivid, bustling mood.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT THROUGHout the book, Whitehead's technique is wildly hit or miss. When he tells us that "from the river you can see the clouds haunch over the adjacent boroughs," we have no choice but to stop and think about Whitehead's "haunch." It might be that he means "hunch" here, but it might be also that he is taking a technical architectural term—a "haunch" is the upper curving part of an arch—and coining it as a verb that would mean the clouds are arching over the boroughs. In either case, we begin to be distracted by Whitehead's clouds of language.

And the clouds gather as we read deeper. "Fetuses fret about what zip code they'll end up in, tapping against membrane in morse code: renting is for

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suckers. Too young to know that the womb schools the dimensions of a studio apartment." All that fancy footwork—prenatal kicks as code, wombs as big or small as studios—cannot hide Whitehead's cliché. And then there is his Coney Island postcard:

> All tomorrow's sunburns gather in wait. Heads dart to and fro as they seek the right spot. Homestead and land grab. This must be the place. Try to remember your personal formula for comfort on a beach, the whole towel thing. Sizzle on the griddle. How to serve man. Gritty evidence of the last visit to the beach clings to the neck of the bottle of suntan lotion.

While the detail in the last line, the "gritty evidence" clinging to the neck of the bottle of lotion, is tactile and true, the rest is just clever noise, hip references to unilluminating things. "All tomorrow's sunburns" signals us to Whitehead's appreciation of the Velvet Underground; "How to serve man" lets us know Whitehead has watched "The Twilight Zone"; neither illuminates their presumptive subject, Coney Island: both call attention to Whitehead. This alternation between "gritty evidence" and grating cleverness becomes immensely frustrating. When, in *John Henry Days*, Whitehead wrote that "tone is the means, not the purpose," he could have been talking about the failed dynamic that begins to figure on too many pages of *The Colossus of New York*. For it cannot be Whitehead's purpose to have his readers leave his Coney Island believing that it is no different from any beach in the world.

But on that beach we are at least in a recognizably human world. Too often, Whitehead's urban portraiture begins in vivid description that devolves into false wise-man pronouncements:

> The gust gains the upper hand as he waits for the light to change and the umbrella is ripped inverse. Many are lost. The wounded, the fallen in this struggle, poke out of trash cans, abandoned, black fabric rippling against split chrome ribs. This is their lot. Either in the trash can or forgotten in the restaurant, the movie theater, the friend's foyer, spreading their slow puddles across floors. Forming an attachment to an umbrella is the shortest route to heartbreak in this town. Any true accounting would reveal that there are only twenty umbrellas in this city, in constant movement from palm to palm. Bunch of Lotharios. So do we learn loss from umbrellas.

Yes, we lose umbrellas. But no, we do not learn loss from them. Whitehead knows this, surely, but he has retained the line because he has been seduced by its surface appeal: it sounds good. Of course, an umbrella is the very thing from which you do not learn loss. Once gone, it is never thought of again. "Loss," by contrast, is unforgettable, something one learns sitting with one's father after bypass surgery or entering a bathroom to find one's friend in a tub of his own blood. And when Whitehead does mention suicide, it is as bloodless as a sigh: "His conspicuous long sleeves hide hesitation marks, souvenirs of that bad summer." Scars on a suicide's wrists are souvenirs of summer. How nice to alliterate over a human wreck: dance on that grave.

Whitehead seems to resort to the language of death only when there is something genuinely pretty to look at. "Check the window to discover yourself in a morgue, a white sheet covering your unfortunate acquaintance. So it snowed last night." Whitehead is wise to tell us that it snowed last night: otherwise, one might think someone actually died.

Conspicuous effects like these alternate maddeningly with writing absent any effect at all. Take the section called "JFK," presented here in its entirety:

> It's time to go.
>
> Everything's packed. All the necessary documentation is secure in pockets and pouches. The time passed so quickly. Take a moment to look back and regret all the things you didn't get to do, the places you didn't get to visit. What you did not see. Promise yourself, Maybe next time.
>
> Assuming it will still be here when you finally return.
>
> Sometimes things disappear.
>
> The airport is one of many conveniently located exits. In the beautiful terminals you can get to anywhere in the world. The names of carriers sort them by destination. Shuffle along and do as you're told. Just a matter of time until you are home.
>
> Take your seat.
>
> When you talk about this trip, and you will, because it was quite a journey and you witnessed many things, there were ups and downs, sudden reversals of fortune and last-minute escapes, it was really something, you will see your friends nod in recognition. They will say, That reminds me of, and they will say, I know exactly what you mean. They know what you are talking about before the words are out of your mouth.
>
> *Talking about* New York *is a way of talking about the world.*
>
> Wake up. With a shudder finally kicked out of the dream. Impossibly this gigantic creature has taken off. This unlikely gargoyle with impossible wings. How we flutter sometimes. Settle in for the journey and forget. Please forget. Try to forget bit by bit, it will be easier on you. Leave it behind. Then the plane tilts in its escape and over the gray wing the city explodes into view with all its miles and spires and inscrutable hustle and as you try to comprehend this sight you realize that you were never really there at all.

Talking about New York may be a way of talking about the world, but if this is an example of talking about New York, I cannot find a single detail of any specificity that would let me know where the hell I am. We could be in any airport in the world. Terminals are "beautiful," planes are "gargoyles," New York was "quite a journey." A better title for this section, one more evocative and accurate, would be "Cliché." There is nothing unfamiliar here, other than the idea that JFK is conveniently located.

THIS IS ALL A PITY, FOR Whitehead in the past has written marvelously. He can produce aesthetic transformations as true and rich as those in *The Colossus of New York* are empty and false. In *The Intuitionist* he described a black man's fraught relationship to his own blackness: "No caramel soda, no prune juice, and definitely no coffee: Pompey won't drink anything darker than his skin, for fear of becoming darker than he already is. As if his skin were a stain that could worsen, steep and saturate into Hell's Black." He noted details of city life, describing an urban traffic jam with great originality, using personification to excellent effect: "The traffic lights are unforgiving at this time of night, mysterious and capricious, as if appalled by this latest indignity of citizens and their vehicles." He had an eye for the odd disjunctions present in urban

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architecture: "As if to distract from the minuscule and cramped philosophy of what would transpire on the floors above, the city offered visitors the special bounty of the lobby." And in the world of *John Henry Days*, he painted austere, vivid landscapes in simple strokes: "The shale resisted hammers, steel and blasting but it gave to rain and wind. Water from Heaven melted the rock of the mountain and the rainwater was red on the ground." The bloodsucking nature of a publicist was softly insinuated by a description of him eating ice cream as though licking at a wound: "He unbandages the bottom of the cone and sucks out the melted ice cream through the hole."

Whitehead's verbal transformations can produce the welcome effect of reinvention that he describes in *The Colossus of New York* as a hallmark of successful art: "It was right in front of you all along but now you see it for the first time." But great writing must do more than refresh and reveal. It must move us as well, and Whitehead has managed this, too, in the past. In the earliest pages of *John Henry Days*, we learn that an event to which the story tends—a festival celebrating the release of a commemorative stamp in honor of folk hero John Henry—will involve a shooting that will take the lives of four people. Over the next three hundred fifty pages, Whitehead introduces us to a dozen principal characters heading inexorably for that fateful moment, any of whom may be the shooter or one of his victims. In scores of brief unnumbered chapters that follow, we move forward and backward in time, meeting many people whose stories in some way intersect that of John Henry. Despite this collage, Whitehead is careful to keep our attention focused on his protagonist, a modern stand-in for John Henry, a young, disaffected, road-worn, junketeering black journalist called J. Sutter. As John Henry fought his contest against the steam engine, Sutter is fighting his own, less songworthy battle: he is trying to break the record for the longest uninterrupted run of junkets without a break. With the fact of a postal bloodbath looming over Sutter's empty striving, as well as the myth of John Henry's death by contest, Whitehead successfully causes readers to worry over Sutter's welfare, to root for his well-being. By the time we reach the book's end, readers are rewarded with the likelihood that Sutter has escaped death and found a meaningful path back to life. It is a moving moment of release.

What is troubling in Whitehead's handling of the violence in *John Henry Days* is how unaffecting the deaths of those who are not as lucky end up being. Although Whitehead has invested a great many pages, roughly one-third of the book, in scenes involving the men who eventually are slain—Sutter's journalistic colleagues—there is nothing moving about their passing. This is largely a product of Whitehead's writerly hubris. He elects to have us learn of the nature of the deaths in a scene that departs from prose and enters into a technical pastiche of Joyce's "Nighttown" sequence in *Ulysses*, with dialogue overheard and formatted as a playscript, complete with pointless dramaturgical directions: *"(sipping),"* *"(nodding),"* etc.:

> POSTAL EMPLOYEE #1:
> We peer into the inexplicable.
> POSTAL EMPLOYEE #2:
> And every day are confronted with
> the unknowable.

It is a style egregiously incompatible with tragedy. I suspect that Whitehead has done this deliberately, to avoid sentimentality; but it has the effect of annulling feeling altogether, and turns a great many pages in the company of characters we should have cared about into empty exercises. Rather than presenting a moment that could move the reader, Whitehead calls our attention away from death and toward our awareness that he is a clever writer. Whitehead has again skirted the issue of pain to focus on the pleasures of form, shaping pain into an unsatisfying aesthetic experience that shuffles human suffering weightlessly into the background.

And yet pain and loss and human gravity of some unbearable kind are in the foreground of every classic work of literature. Hamlet unpacking his heart with words; the Invisible Man walking lonely streets unseen; Dante losing his way in the dark; Gabriel Conroy learning his wife loves another; Oedipus blinding himself for his blindness; Molloy crawling forward with beautiful futility; Edna Pontellier drowning in an ocean of sorrow—pain and loss are the forces that find their expression and form in all writing that endures. Pain at the loss of fathers, of friendships, of loves, of life, of self. This reckoning with loss, this bold confrontation with what is taken from us, is why writing is written, why it is read.

Whitehead's earlier work exhibited his awareness of these truths. From book to book, he took inspiring leaps forward as a novelist, reaching toward, and beginning to attain, his own means of addressing and dramatizing our losses. But Whitehead's weakness for empty effect that neglects affect—equally a feature of his novels—has been given full flower in *The Colossus of New York*, a book that indulges Whitehead's worst instincts. It allows him to be swaggering where he should be controlled, vague where he should be specific, homiletic where he should be secular. It is dripping with empty pyrotechnic effect, it is provincial and strangely coldhearted. My hope is that it is quickly forgotten, but my worry is that it will be embraced, in this period of New Yorkophilia, as the classic that it is not. The book is much as Whitehead himself describes Times Square: "Simmer the idea of metropolis until it is reduced to a few blocks, sprinkle in a dash of hype and a tablespoon of woe. Add hubris to taste. Serving size: a lot." For the sake of his soul as a serious writer, may he come to distrust this little book for how far it has taken him from how far he had come. ■

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Unassuming

I KNEW LARRY TISCH, WHO DIED of gastric cancer last Saturday at 80, long before I became friends with his sons. (We first met at an emergency fund-raising breakfast for the United Jewish Appeal during the Yom Kippur War.) But it was through his sons, and particularly his son Tommy, that Larry and I also became friends—across nearly two decades, it is true, but real friends, nonetheless. And it is through his sons and their lives that I came to understand the fineness of Larry's character and of his wife Billie's, too. After all, they lived together for 55 years. The last time I saw them, they were sitting on a couch, holding hands. Larry was already deep into his illness. But their eyes were deep into each other's love. At the funeral and the first night of shivah, the period of mourning when friends visit the bereaved, she wore a delicate black lace dress she'd first donned 50 years ago.

LARRY AND HIS BROTHER BOB BUILT A great financial and commercial empire from almost nothing. No one knows how many billions Larry accumulated during his lifetime. But he did not raise his children rich. They have no airs, none, and you simply cannot imagine any of them (or any of his grandchildren, either) appearing in that solipsistic and self-pitying HBO psychodrama "Born Rich," made by a young Johnson & Johnson heir and featuring scions of old money and new. First, each of Larry's sons work, conscientiously and diligently. But they do not devote themselves only to business. Each in his different way has a passion for justice. (Do not take this to mean they all vote like you and I do, though they may on occasion.) Their passion for justice is concrete, aimed at enhancing the lives of otherwise ignored and distressed people, mostly young people. Their charities are not the ones for which balls are held at the Plaza. And that was largely true for Larry's charities, as well.

ANDREW AND HIS WIFE, ANN, FOR example, have seeded schools for girls who otherwise would be doomed to learn in environments dominated by the aggressions of young males. You could not count the number of underclass kids the private voucher program, set up by Tommy and Alice, has put into alternative schools. James and Merryl are, along with my TNR partner Michael Steinhardt, probably the major Jewish philanthropists in the country. Daniel is a pillar of Montefiore Medical Center. This goes on and on, even unto Boston, where my wife's Family Center—an institution with an innovative approach to bolstering disintegrating families—also benefits from Tisch charity. And you have only to have scanned the memorial notices in *The New York Times* to grasp the breadth of Larry's philanthropy. He took his Jewishness seriously, and no Jews in trouble were alien to him. But the parochial instinct is father to the universal instinct: His extraordinary generosity extended way beyond his tribe.

WHILE LARRY WAS MODERATE TO conservative politically, he was scandalized by what one journalist has called "the crime wave of the boom years." (Of course, Larry never believed in the boom years, and the oh-so-smart people of that decade ridiculed him for his investing timidity.) Around Larry there was never the slightest whiff of wrongdoing. He worried about (and railed against) the excessive remuneration of corporate executives, often paid enormous bonuses for throwing their workers into the ranks of the unemployed. And he thought the widening gulf between the rich and the middle class, and between the rich and the poor, threatened the liberal order that capitalism fueled. Moreover, he considered that gulf morally wrong, a strain on the obligations and bonds the various classes and groups felt toward each other. This is the salutary heresy that many politicians evade by calling it "class war."

IN A LONG AND FOUL OBITUARY IN last Sunday's *Times*, Jonathan Kandell commenced his narrative by writing that, after "saving CBS Inc. from a hostile takeover," Larry was "reviled for diminishing what was once the nation's premier broadcasting network." Reviled? Maybe my memory is playing tricks on me. But was CBS in 1986 really such a jewel in the crown of American culture? I daresay not. It was a TV network like the other TV networks, banal and predictable. And Larry left CBS stronger than he found it, encouraging the likes of Howard Stringer, David Letterman, and TV eminence Les Moonves.

I DO REMEMBER THE PANICKY ST. Vitus's dance atmosphere during the inevitable clashes between dominant new stockholders and entrenched and hallowed executives, especially Thomas Wyman and Don Hewitt, allied with what is called the "talent." I have a hunch that this *Times* farewell to Larry, which should itself be reviled, is the old CBS's revenge on him. Dare I remind readers that Hewitt's wife is Marilyn Berger, a key contributor to the *Times*'s necrology desk?

MAYBE DON HEWITT DID REVILE Larry Tisch. So what? The students who graduated from NYU after Larry took over its trustee reins and made it a truly important university, the patients at the NYU hospitals that he rebuilt and built anew, the Russian and Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, those who can't buy every book they need or want but have to check them out at the New York Public Library, the Jewish and Arab children at the Jerusalem zoo, those who have learned from and at the multiple ventures he underwrote in art, film, drama—none of these people revile him. They probably don't love him either, and that's because most of them probably do not even know his name. Which is exactly how he constructed his life, without presumptions. I once needed to talk to Larry but couldn't find his phone number. So I called Tommy to get it. To which Tommy replied, "Larry's number is in the New York phone book. And his address, too."

LARRY'S CASKET RECEDED FROM THE packed-to-the-rafters Central Synagogue in Manhattan to the stirring strains of *Hatikvah*, "The Hope," which took on the terrible melancholy of the day, and he has now (as the ancient tradition says) been gathered into the bosom of the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel. Blessed be the truthful judge.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Shine the Light of Liberty in Russia as Well

Michael McFaul is the Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and an associate professor of political science at Stanford University

In a recent speech to [illegible] the twentieth anniversary of the National Endowment of Democracy (NED), President George W. Bush made a compelling case for the United States continuing to engage in promoting democracy worldwide. In a speech of strategic vision that both Ronald Reagan and Woodrow Wilson would have been proud to deliver, Bush stated that "the advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country." He asserted that "liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history… and freedom—the freedom we prize—is not for us alone, it is the right and capacity of all mankind."

In the speech, Bush also discussed countries such as Cuba, Burma, Zimbabwe, and China where "our commitment to democracy is tested." Missing from his list was Russia.

This omission is a mistake. Russia is not a dictatorship. But **the drift back toward autocracy under President Vladimir Putin can no longer be ignored**.

The recent arrest of Russian oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky is the latest evidence of democratic backsliding. To be sure, Khodorkovsky is no champion of democracy. He did not spend his youth campaigning for freedom of speech and has done nothing to stop the Russian wars in Chechnya. Rather, he is a businessman who made his money in the same corrupt way that every person in business did in the anarchic years of the 1990s. Nonetheless, his arrest was not the application of the rule of law but only the service of political ends. Khodorkovsky, an independent economic actor with political ambitions, threatened Putin's control of the Russian political system. In removing Khodorkovsky, Putin purged his administration of those officials hired originally by Boris Yeltsin—eliminating another pocket of political power.

Khodorkovsky's arrest is only the latest chapter in Putin's campaign to remove checks on his power. Since becoming president in 2000, Putin has chased away other oligarchs, seized control of national television networks, emasculated the power of the Federal Council (Russia's equivalent of the U.S. Senate), and tamed barons who once served as a balance to Yeltsin's presidential rule. And the ruthless way in which his army has conducted the war in Chechnya should leave little doubt about Putin's attitude toward human rights. Putin believes that he is on a mission to clean up the Yeltsin-era mess and create a new and powerful Russia state. If democratic attributes of the regime must be sacrificed to achieve this goal, then so be it.

President Bush may not have the power to reverse these trends. But he must make clear which side of the fence the American people are on. In reflecting on the cold war era in Europe and Asia in his NED speech, Bush stated that "we provided inspiration for the oppressed. In prison camps, in banned union meetings, in clandestine churches, men and women knew that the whole world was not sharing their own nightmare. They knew of at least one place—a bright and hopeful land—where freedom was valued and secure. And they prayed that America would not forget them, or forget the mission to promote liberty around the world." The democrats in Russia are still praying that we do not forget them or abandon our mission to promote liberty *everywhere* in the world, including Russia.

—Michael McFaul

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